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ABSTRACT

A prospectus and practical guide, this manual shows college teachers how to help students better understand social problems by comparing sociology with two other types of social knowledge (common sense and journalism) and cultivate critical thinking skills which transcend the three types of social knowledge. Chapter 1 proposes a teaching/learning strategy which asks students to assess the logical adequacy of statements selected from common sense, journalism, and sociology. Presented are pre- and posttest data from three classes which provide tentative support for the claim that rational thinking skills can be effectively learned in a social problems course. Chapter 2 provides a comparative framework for analyzing common sense, journalism, and sociology. The third chapter contains guidelines for critical reasoning which will help students analyze the adequacy of statements about social problems. The concluding chapter describes 15 classroom exercises designed to promote critical reasoning. Provided for each exercise are concept area, teaching objective, a description of materials needed, and teaching procedure. (RM)

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TEACHING SOCIAL PROBLEMS THROUGH CRITICAL REASONING

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PREFACE

The work of educating college students often seems to take place in a tunnel. Expert teachers use thick textbooks to expound on certain truths worth memorizing. Disciplines are presented with the assumption that they represent the only point of view to be tolerated in the classroom. We do not accept this approach to learning in general education courses such as introductory sociology and social problems. This manual of instruction offers an alternative to conventional classroom teaching.

We offer a broader perspective on the social knowledge which permeates modern society. As citizens in a pluralistic world, we are surrounded by a chorus of claims about contemporary social problems and their possible cures. Bartenders, barbers, preachers, newspaper editors, politicians, and sociology teachers express a view which they believe is worthy of attention. Rather than presenting sociology as the only viewpoint which deserves 18 weeks of exclusive attention, it is studied as one of three perspectives which illuminates human affairs in the late twentieth century.

It is our belief that students understand social problems better by comparing sociology with two other types of social knowledge: common sense and journalism. Accordingly, attention is given to ways in which sociology is similar to and dissimilar from the other two perspectives. We believe that it is important to understand why and how these three perspectives flourish in our time. Thus, we try to demonstrate that on different occasions and for various purposes each of these perspectives is more valuable than the other two. We hope students learn to appreciate sociology but we do not proclaim it to be of greater value than common sense and journalism.

We also believe that students need to cultivate critical thinking skills which transcend the three types of social knowledge. Students must learn how to assess critically various statements made about social problems. Using their reasoning skills in numerous situations, students should be just as critical of statements made by sociologists as they are of comments made by their friends or by journalists. We encourage techers to enjoy students who use critical thinking skills in the classroom.

This manual is not a textbook for the social problems course. It is a prospectus and practical guide for teachers of social problems who are interested in an alternative method of instruction. It sketches a theory of the teaching-learning process and provides concrete examples of how to use classroom time in ways other than lectures and unfocused discussion. We offer a new direction and a few sign posts along the way.

Our alternative approach is presented in four chapters. Chapter 1 summarizes the teaching-learning model developed by Paul Baker and systematically criticized and classroom tested by Louis Anderson. Chapter 2 provides a comparative framework for analyzing common sense, journalism, and sociology. Chapter 3 outlines topics of critical reasoning that can be applied to various statements about social problems. Chapter 4 describes 15 classroom episodes that have been developed and tested during the past four years. The episodes are presented in the same format developed by Geertsen, Sundeen, Allen, and Gunning in Eighty-One Techniques for Teaching Sociological Concepts. Each episode teaches some aspect of critical reasoning.

This manual is the product of collaborative endeavors. The first phase of the work was conducted by Baker in the middle 1970s. He had an itch to develop a new way of teaching social problems. And he had the good fortune of meeting many colleagues in the ASA Teaching Project who offered critical support on numerous occasions. It would be difficult to list all the good friends who offered assistance; but a short list of invaluable associates includes Nancy Stein, William D'Antonio, Charles Goldsmid, Everett Wilson, Vaughn Grisham, Reece McGee, Charlotte Vaughn, and Ted Wagenaar. During 1979-1980 Baker spent a year at the University of Illinois-Urbana to further develop his understanding of critical thinking. At this point Professors Jack Easley, Robert Ennis, Norman Denzin, and Norbert Wiley provided much encouragement. Three teaching assistants also contributed significantly: Susan Shoemaker, Mark Beeman, and Skip Volk. Special thanks must be given also to Steve Rutter, Wadsworth Publishing Company, who expects to see this manual transformed into a book.

Baker's most persistent and helpful colleague has been Louis Anderson. Anderson assessed critically every phase of the development of the teaching model. He offered many invaluable suggestions concerning the ideas found in Chapters 1, 2, and 3. After classroom testing the model on several occasions, he spent the fall term of 1981 at ISU observing Baker in the classroom. After each classroom session we reviewed the dynamics of the teaching and learning activities. Anderson then initiated the development of the 15 episodes in Chapter 4. Our work of teaching social problems through critical reasoning is not finished; but it is time to share our efforts and invite critical appraisal from our colleagues.

The study of social problems should be enjoyable and engaging; it should also be informed and intelligent. We hope that this manual serves the twin goals of personal enjoyment and intellectual stimulation for teachers and students alike.

Paul J. Baker
Louis E. Anderson

December 1982

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CHAPTER 1

TEACHING RATIONAL THINKING IN THE SOCIAL PROBLEMS COURSE

A teaching/learning strategy is proposed which asks students to assess the logical adequacy of statements selected from common sense, journalism, and sociology. Students learn to apply specific topics of rational thinking to various case materials. Pre-post test data from three classes provide tentative support for the claim that rational thinking skills can be effectively learned in a social problems course.

Teaching Rational Thinking in the Social Problems Course

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INTRODUCTION

During most of the twentieth century in most sociology departments the social problems course has been one of the basics of the discipline. Social problems is a bread and butter course offered to undergraduates who often have no long-range commitment to sociology as a field of professional study. It has never enjoyed academic stature (Mills, 1943). In the 1890s, Harvard professor Francis Peabody taught a social problems course nicknamed by his students "Peabo's drainage, drunkenness, and divorce"; more recently a critic has labeled the course "nuts, sluts, and perverts" (Liazos, 1972). The social problems course rarely provides a cumulative knowledge base for the remaining sociology curriculum, yet it continues to be popular. While chairpersons in search of enrollment are pleased to promote its accent on relevance, little is said about analytical rigor. Can the social problems course be designed to join intellectual rigor with contemporary relevance? Believing such a marriage is possible, I have developed over the past five years an alternative social problems course. Following is a summary of the key features of this course, including exploratory evidence which indicates that learning objectives can be achieved. This article is a progress report on the unfinished business of bringing rational thinking to the social problems course (Baker, 1975, 1979a).

Rational thinking is a complex set of logical operations and interdependent mental processes which can be divided into two broad areas: critical reasoning and creative reasoning (Dewey,

Authors' Note: *I would like to thank Robert Ennis and William D'Antonio for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this article. I am indebted also to Louis Anderson, my persistent critic and friend in experimental teaching endeavors. The development of this rational thinking model was supported by The Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (Grant G007804637), Department of Education.*

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1933; Ennis, 1962, 1979; Friere, 1970; and Broudy, 1978). *Critical reasoning* is the assessment of the logical and empirical adequacy of a nonfictional statement. It is a reactive cognitive mode in which the critical thinker determines the adequacy of someone else's or one's own statement. *Creative reasoning* is the creation of a nonfictional statement which can be logically and empirically defended. It is a proactive cognitive mode in which the creative thinker expresses ideas defensibly. Nonfictional statements are distinguished here from fictional statements because writers of fiction enjoy poetic license.

Current teaching/learning strategies in most social problems courses fail to give sufficient attention to rational thinking. This failure stems primarily from the pervasive commitment to expository teaching methods which stresses memorization of what others claim to be true. Whether conventional textbook or typical lecture, the exposition is incapable of generating sufficient critical understanding for life-long impact.

The cycle of dependency created in part by expository methods must be broken. The gap between instruction and rational thinking cannot be closed by asking students to attend lectures, memorize definitions, and identify or replicate an array of information items on exam day. To borrow Everett Wilson's aphorism: telling is not teaching, and listening is not learning. I have attempted to break the dependency cycle of expository teaching and replicative learning by developing an alternative instructional model. A brief account of this teaching/learning system will clarify some important points of disagreement.

A RATIONALE FOR DIALECTICAL TEACHING: ENLIGHTENED CITIZENSHIP

A social problems course in the expository tradition makes the implicit claim that classroom knowledge is transferable to pursuits beyond the academy and that knowledge acquired from lectures and textbooks will help students become better informed citizens. Despite weighty rhetoric about the intellectual power of the sociological imagination, sociologists know next to nothing about the educational tasks which nurture enlightened citizenship. Can sociologists teach students to be more sophisticated citizens? No one knows. Empirical literature on the topic is virtually nonexistent. My own efforts to understand the problem have led to the following tentative hypothesis: knowledge essential for the citizen is primarily personal; it stems from beliefs, private experiences, a rich network of associates at home, work, neighborhood, and exposure to mass media. Most academic knowledge is not easily grafted to civic knowledge because of the technical expertise and specialized vocabulary of academicians. Many students experience classroom knowledge as an isolated encounter. The nature and extent of this compartmentalization

deserve empirical scrutiny, but preliminary evidence seems to support the contention that: (1) students and former students rarely purchase college textbooks on the open market; (2) students seldom discuss academic ideas outside the classroom; and (3) very little academic knowledge is retained 5 or 6 weeks after the semester ends (Wiggins, Bushell, Pope, 1979). No system of reinforcement exists to sustain academic knowledge outside the classroom. It therefore dies a quick death after finals and has little impact on future civic experiences.

Given the limited capacity of academic knowledge to translate into effective civic knowledge, alternative teaching/learning strategies which self-consciously bring the civic role to the classroom must be developed. In this new setting students are asked to pay attention to their common sense ideas of social problems. As life-long consumers of journalism, students are asked also to scrutinize the journalist's capacity to inform citizens about social problems. Finally, students assess academic knowledge presented by the sociology professor. Three knowledge systems are examined as independent, yet interdependent ways of knowing the social world. Students assume the citizen role as they weigh their common sense views as well as the contribution of journalists and sociologists.

I propose a teaching/learning strategy in which the chief cognitive tool for gaining awareness is the comparative method. Rather than proclaim that sociology is superior to journalism and common sense, each framework is justified in its own terms and considered sound for certain purposes at hand. By keeping the three frameworks in tension, students and teacher can explore the meaning of social problems by comparing types of evidence, a variety of definitions, types of explanations, and solutions.

Such a teaching/learning strategy is dialectical. I share Klaus Riegel's assertion that dialectical operations are the final stage of human cognitive development. According to Riegel (1973: 60):

> Dialectical thinking emphasizes the interdependence of form and content. In its narrow sense, it deals with the interrelationship between methods and results, in its most general sense, between subject and object. As one person pronounces a judgment, he externalizes a standard which will direct and modify another person's judgment, which, once it too has been pronounced, will produce further modifications. Thus, these interactions set a process in motion which is in continuous flux and only temporarily at rest, namely at those moments in which a pronouncement takes place. Such a process of evaluation and reevaluation characterizes the thoughts and judgments of mature persons.

Various types of social knowledge are perceived as continually emerging and interacting. Teachers of the social world attempt to grasp this interaction. Dialectical teaching emphasizes the perpetual modification of all types of social knowledge, as many

people from all walks of life define and redefine the social problems of their day.

Alfred Schutz (1971: 121-123) helps to clarify the teaching/learning process I propose. He discusses the social distribution of knowledge in terms of three ideal typical roles: the expert, the man on the street, and the well-informed citizen.

> The expert's knowledge is restricted to a limited field but therein it is clear and distinct. His opinions are based upon warranted assertions; his judgments are not mere guesswork or loose suppositions.
>
> The man on the street has a working knowledge of many fields which are not necessarily coherent with one another. His is a knowledge of recipes indicating how to bring forth in typical situations typical results by typical means. The recipes indicate procedures which can be trusted even though they are not clearly understood. This knowledge in all its vagueness is still sufficiently precise for the practical purpose at hand.
>
> The ideal type that we propose to call the well-informed citizen (thus shortening the more correct expression: the citizen who aims at being well informed) stands between the ideal type of the expert and that of the man on the street. On the one hand, he neither is, nor aims at being, possessed of expert knowledge; on the other, he does not acquiesce in the fundamental vagueness of a mere recipe knowledge or in the irrationality of his unclarified passions and sentiments. To be well informed means to him to arrive at reasonably founded opinions in a field which as he knows are at least mediately of concern to him although not bearing upon his purpose at hand.

A social problems course should not be designed to create miniature academic experts. The central design should stimulate the education of well-informed citizens who have the ability to form well-founded opinions about social problems. Schutz (1971: 130-131) elaborates on this active mode of critical assessment:

> The well-informed citizen finds himself placed in a domain which belongs to an infinite number of possible frames of reference. There are no pregiven ready-made ends, no fixed border lines within which he can look for shelter. He has to choose the frame of reference by choosing his interest; he has to investigate the zones of relevances adhering to it; and he has to gather as much knowledge as possible of the origin and sources of the relevances actually or potentially imposed upon him. This is an attitude as different from that of the expert whose knowledge is delimited by a single system of relevances as from that of the man on the street which is indifferent to the structure of relevance itself. For this very reason he has to form a reasonable opinion and to look for information.

The proposed social problems course is designed to help students recognize different zones of relevance and to cultivate ceonceptual skills for understanding various social problems.

Such a classroom takes on the shape of a kaleidoscope in which teacher and students explore a multiplicity of perspectives. Sociology then becomes *an informing* (never *the informed*) perspective.

The open-ended and plural character of dialectical teaching may suggest that anything goes in the classroom. Such is not the case. All opinions do not command equal time or legitimacy. Guidelines and order are introduced by constructing a general model of social knowledge and by specifying critical reasoning topics for statements about social problems.

FRAMEWORK OF COMPARISON: A GENERAL MODEL OF SOCIAL KNOWLEDGE

There are numerous dimensions of social knowledge. For purposes of dialectical teaching, I elaborate two: the scope of awareness (micro/macro) and the degree of generality (concrete/abstract). Cross-tabulating these two dimensions yields a simple two-fold table with four basic types of social knowledge: micro-concrete, micro-abstract, macro-concrete, macro-abstract. The generic model in Figure 1 can be applied to common sense, journalism, and sociology.

Ordinary citizens, journalists, and sociologists have skills analogous to a modern camera crew. With varying degree of

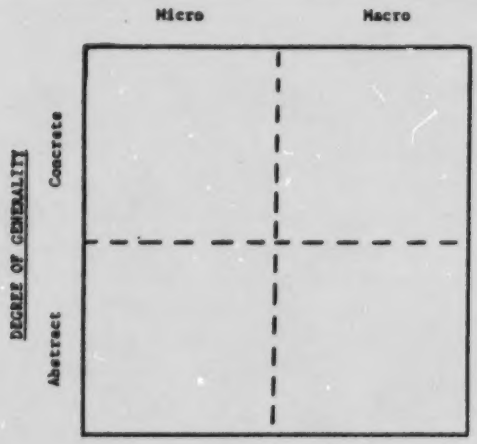

Figure 1: Perceptive Field to Assess Social Problems: Common Sense, Journalism, Sociology

mastery, people from all three perspectives can zoom in on small details of face-to-face encounters, as well as adjust the lens to capture the broad panorama of entire societies. Citizens experience varying degrees of awareness about the scope of social existence. They are aware of both the intimate world of interpersonal relations (family, friends, neighbors, colleagues) and

the remote world of giant corporations, federal bureaucracies, metropolitan areas, and nation states. Using the terms private troubles and public issues, C. Wright Mills (1959: 7) calls attention to this duality of social consciousness. He perceives sociology as an imaginative discipline which cultivates a self-conscious "capacity to shift from one perspective to another—from the political to the psychological; from examination of a single family to comparative assessment of national budgets of the world." The challenge offered by Mills has been accepted by journalists and sociologists. A brief history of these two professional crafts reveals interest ranging from the smallest to the largest social units imaginable (see Wagner, 1964).

The other dimension concerns the degree of generality. All citizens can distinguish a concrete occurrence (the day President Kennedy was assassinated) from an abstract principle (speculation about the nature of human violence). Some everyday experiences such as birth, death, and illness generate the tendency to ask why and how. Knowing this, journalists report front page facts and reserve interpretation for the editorial page. Finally, sociologists discuss generality in terms of empirical and theoretical work. Wilhelm Windleband and Heinrich Rickert use the terms ideographic (empirical) and nomothetic (theoretical). Ideographic knowledge emphasizes unique once-in-a-lifetime events, while nomothetic knowledge concentrates on the universal and recurrent features of social life.

The preceding commentary on the dual dimensions of social thought is exceedingly brief and rudimentary. Any dichotomous typology is subject to elaboration. Sometimes twins are transformed into triplets; little and big often acquire a medium sized sibling. For example, in the University of Chicago College Catalog (1978: 139) the limitation of dual terms is recognized by adding a third: "The discipline of sociology examines social phenomena on three levels: microscopic (face-to-face interaction and small groups), mesoscopic (institutions/organizations, and local communities); and macroscopic (total societies)." In like manner, the polar opposites of concrete and abstract knowledge often negotiate toward a mid region of "experienced wisdom," "interpretive reporting," and "middle-range theorizing." Despite the mechanical implications of Figure 1, knowledge of the social universe is not packaged in four pigeonholes. Figure 1 shows that two dimensions can be cross-tabulated as a field of tendencies. Various accounts of social problems—a newspaper editorial, a scholarly article—can be located on various intersections.

Citizens, journalists, and sociologists engage in multi-dimensional assessment of social problems. From each perspective social phenomena are perceived on two dimensions: microscopic/macroscopic and concrete/abstract. However, recognition of like tendencies should not imply the existence of like knowledge systems for common sense, journalism, and sociology. For example, the micro-concrete category for journalism is different from the micro-concrete category for sociology. Descriptive soci-

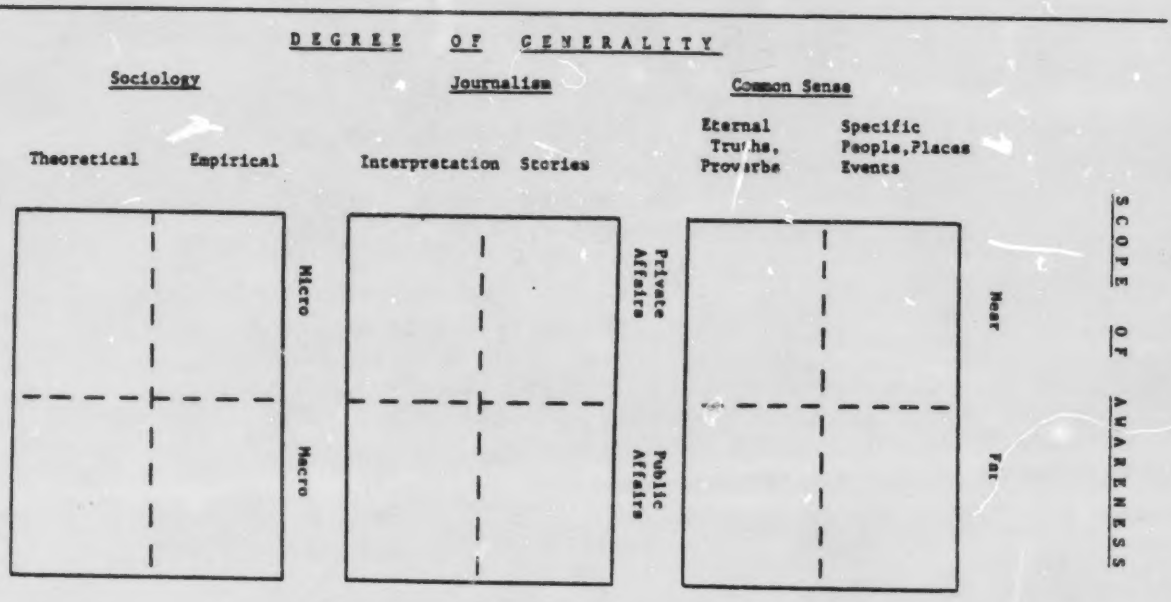

Figure 2: Parallel Tendencies of Common Sense, Journalism, and Sociology

ological studies are never as concrete as the detailed stories found in newspapers. As Figure 2 suggests, these parallel tendencies do not create isomorphic patterns.

A comparative framework to analyze common sense, journalism, and sociology must be established, but the teaching effort should not be preoccupied with the subtleties of various typologies. Attention should be given to the tentative, pragmatic nature of typologies designed to serve heuristic purposes (Weber, 1949; Schutz, 1954; McKinney, 1966). The comparative framework is not an end in itself. It is a teaching/learning tool providing meaningful points of departure for further inquiry (see Baker, 1979b).

CULTIVATING LOGICAL SKILLS: TOPICS OF CREATIVE AND CRITICAL REASONING

Identifying types of social knowledge is the first phase of social inquiry. Much can be gained by assessing social problems statements according to their degree of generality and magnitude of scope, but students must also develop additional reasoning skills. Any sophisticated understanding of social problems requires the ability to logically assess statements made by ordinary citizens, journalists, and sociologists. Through the use of logical principles, well-informed citizens are better prepared to make correct assessment of these statements (Ennis, 1962; 1979). Critical reasoning skills will help develop better creative reasoning skills, thus enabling citizens to more likely express their own statements logically.

Two basic assumption precede the following discussion of creative and critical reasoning. The first assumption concerns the distinction between common sense and science. In many instances these two methods of inquiry follow the same rules of logic (Black, 1952: 135-136). Since sociology, journalism, and common sense share the same thought processes (with varying degrees of analytical rigor and empirical precision), each is examined by the same rules of logic. The second assumption recognizes the pragmatic dimension of critical thinking. The pragmatic person always notes the background purpose for any statement of judgment, acceptable in one context, unacceptable in another. For example, evidence reported on population growth is not expected to be as precise or detailed in a newspaper as in a technical government report (Ennis, 1962: 85).

The field of logical analysis is broad and complex but the course design is limited to five key principles. Students are expected to master these principles which are systematically applied to *all* reading assignments during the semester. On *all* occasions, they must use critical judgment to assess the logical adequacy of statements taken from textbooks, newspaper articles, magazine articles, and interview protocols.

1. Defining the Problem. Students identify and assess the major thesis of a statement. "What is the main point?" They also examine key terms, definitions, and phrases. Is the use of concepts consistent with a standard dictionary? Does the author give terms a special meaning understandable only in the context of the total statement? Do some words have double meanings and thereby mislead the reader?

2. Assessing Evidence. Students learn to assess the claims of evidence in three ways: (1) Students must assess whether or not the author provides sources of evidence. Is it possible to confirm or corroborate sources by consulting various standard reference works? (2) Students must be alert for overgeneralization and scanty evidence. Does the author refine generalizations with appropriate qualifications? Can students offer counter examples which refute or diminish the sweep and scope of a generalization? (3) Students need to assess the reliability of observation statements. They must recognize bias which diminishes objectivity and understand the relationship between the sample presented and the alleged population it represents.

3. Determining Cause-Effect Relationships. Students learn to recognize causal statements which claim to explain the occur-

rence and persistence of social problems. They must learn to identify words or phrases which indicate *cause* and *effect*, the two key parts of any causal statement. After identifying key causal elements, they must assess the adequacy of complex statements in which several causal factors may be related to several effects.

4. Clarifying Value Judgments. The first task of value clarification is learning to examine assumptions and implicit statements which have bearing on value questions. This first step often involves identifying *value objects* and *evaluative terms.* Students must also clarify the criteria being used to assert value judgments. Finally, students must learn to distinguish between factual and evaluative statements.

5. Logical Consistency in Stating Solutions. Students learn to assess the four preceding principles of critical reasoning as logically interrelated elements of a total argument. A solution statement does not stand in isolation, and therefore students must ask: "Does the author maintain a consistent line of reasoning when discussing definitions, evidence, causality, and values?" Not all statements about social problems claim to offer solutions. Logically coherent positions can be constructed in which no solution is feasible. Students are not expected to discover a solution to every social problem; rather, they must detect flaws in reasoning found in any statement of solution or nonsolution.

These five principles of critical reasoning are guidelines and not prescriptions for all social analysis. The field of social problems cannot be reduced to fail-safe formulas which can be applied mechanically with equal ease to all instances (see Baker, 1979b).

CONSTRUCTING LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING EXERCISES

The themes covered in the social problems course are rather conventional. Seven problems are examined from micro and macro perspectives, generating fourteen topics for the semester.

Social Problem	Micro	Macro
Social Inequality	Life Styles of Social Classes	Welfare System
Changing Sex Roles	Division of Labor within the Family	Sex and Occupational Structure
Race Relations	Black Family	Desegregating Public Education
Population/Pollution	Family Planning	Growing Population and Environmental Impact
Urban Crisis	Neighborhoods	City Power Structures
Crime and Delinquency	Juvenile Delinquent Gangs	Laws on Drug Use
Bureaucracy	Human Relations in Work Settings	Bureaucratization as a Societal Trend

Each of the fourteen topics provides learning exercises which draw on a wide range of case materials from common sense, journalism, and sociology. Each exercise emphasizes some aspect of critical thinking or dialectical understanding. For example, the study of population begins with a discussion of independent and dependent variables. Sometimes population change is an independent variable (e.g., when studying its impact on environment, urban affairs, education) and at other times, a dependent variable (e.g., when determining factors influencing fertility and mortality rates). A basic understanding of causal models used by sociologists is then examined by assigning a sample of newspaper and magazine articles on the same topic. Students also discuss the interrelated character of micro- and macro-systems. For example, decisions by couples (micro) to have 1 or 3 children have a profound impact on national population trends (macro). Causal models also have clear implications for policy statements. For example, some family planning strategists claim to have averted global disasters (Bogue, 1979).

As the semester proceeds, some of the broader themes of analysis become apparent. For example, questions about adequate evidence are reassessed as concerns of methodology. Attention is given to three distinct methods that support claims of sufficient evidence: (1) participant observation, (2) survey analysis, (3) demographic analysis. In each instance sociologists have developed highly specialized literature on the proper techniques of observation and analysis. With less sophistication, but considerably broader appeal, journalists have made extensive use of all three methods. Reporters often enter the field to gain firsthand knowledge of a situation (e.g., Tom Wicker's study of Attica Prison, *A Time To Die*); they rely on numerous polling services such as Harris, Roper, and Gallup; and finally, acquire and translate for public consumption huge volumes of government statistics prepared by trained social scientists.

In order to become well-informed citizens, students must not limit their concern for adequate evidence to the specialized methodological interests of academic sociologists. I attempt to bridge the gap between the academy and the broader community by examining parallel methodological issues in journalism. Conventional academic questions of reliability, validity, objectivity, sample size, unintended bias, and historicity of data become basic tools to assess the adequacy of evidence. Journalists are not perceived as inferior empirical investigators; on the contrary, students learn to appreciate the wide range of journalistic styles and capacities.

Time and space do not permit a detailed description of the many classroom exercises developed during the past few years.[1] With the basic educational goal of enlightened citizenship, all exercises are intended to bring the civic role to the classroom where the principles of rational thinking are practiced. The classroom then becomes the center for intensive critical assessment of case study materials found within as well as outside the academy. The critical assessment of articles from professional journals or popular magazines is a rehearsal of mental skills which can be acted out long after the semester ends.

INSTRUCTIONAL MODELS TO HARNESS THE DIALECTIC

During the past several years, I have explored several teaching/learning strategies which emphasize various aspects of dialectical instruction. Three relatively distinct instructional models have been used: structured inquiry, focused inquiry, and open-ended inquiry. Sometimes all three options are available and on other occasions, only one or two models are offered, with less flexibility intended.

The three models are constructed from basic themes found in the vast literature on human development. I am especially indebted to the following formulations: field dependent and field independent cognitive styles (Witkin et al., 1977); stages of moral development (Kohlberg, 1969); forms of intellectual and ethical development in the college years (Perry, 1968); and, stages of maturity (Loevinger, 1976). Several dimensions of the self are delineated (ego, moral, ethical, intellectual, cognitive, interpersonal) and numerous stages are specified in a hierarchical fashion. This impressive literature is not without its shortcomings, however. I am not convinced by various reifications which claim to identify distinct "stages" or "levels." Nor am I persuaded by some developmentalists that all people have an inner motivation toward higher stages. These reservations do not deny the value of developmental models for classroom teachers. Students do seem to fall along an imaginary polar line from conformity to autonomy. Their intellectual inclinations range from simple recall to critical and creative analysis.

Without denying many valuable insights in the developmental literature, I have restricted my focus to two dimensions of academic orientation: (1) the degree of tolerance for ambiguity, and (2) the degree of cognitive complexity. These dimensions are used to create the three-fold typology schematically presented in Figure 3.

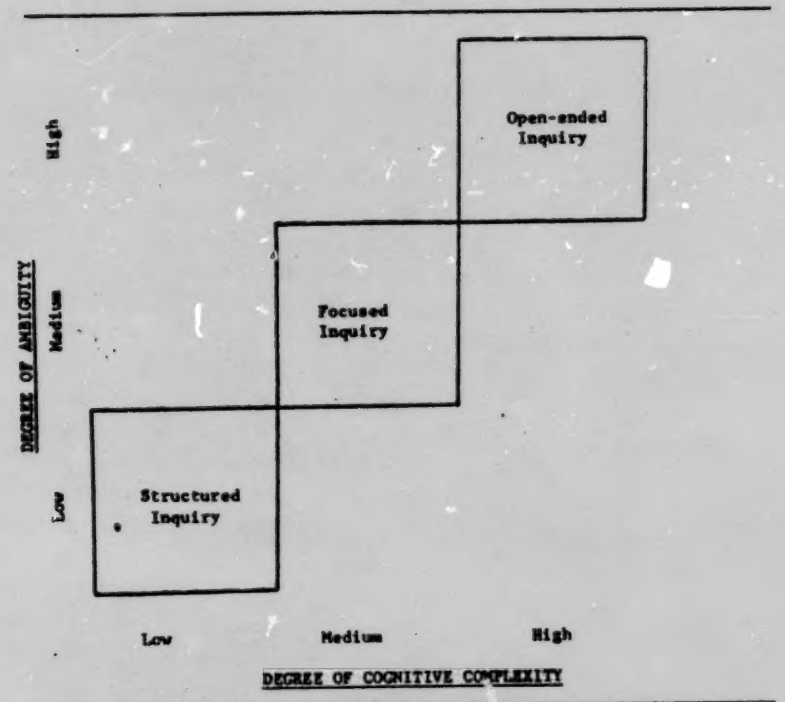

Figure 3: Teaching/Learning Options by Degree of Ambiguity and Degree of Complexity

STRUCTURED INQUIRY: TEACHING TO THE TEST

This teaching/learning strategy provides clearly defined learning tasks which require analytical skills presented in the typology of social knowledge and the five principles of critical reasoning. Each class period is devoted to a specific topic of inquiry (e.g., learning to classify types of social knowledge from a sample of sociological abstracts). At the end of each class, students are given the specific essay question (or questions) which will appear on the following quiz. At the time of the quiz, students will have accumulated 12-15 essay questions, many of which are accompanied by a new set of case study materials. For example, the first set of exercises develops skills to classify types of social knowledge. During the first week students purchase and read a metropolitan newspaper. They classify news items as stories of private affairs, stories of public affairs, interpretation of private affairs, or interpretation of public affairs. Class time is spent in small groups clarifying micro-macro and concrete-abstract tendencies of specific news items. The exam question which accompanies this classroom exercise reiterates the basic objectives learned that day. The following question is assigned on the day of the newspaper assignment:

> Please read carefully all news items in the selected metropolitan newspaper. Identify 12 items as stories of private affairs, stories of public affairs, interpretation of private affairs, interpretation of public affairs. Comment on your selection of 4 items which fit the 4 types of social knowledge. Acknowledging that discrepancies do exist between ideal types and actual cases, comment on two news items which do not conveniently fit any of the 4 types of social knowledge.

Students will study this question with another issue of the same newspaper published two or three days prior to the exam.

A similar classroom exercise is used for the classification of sociology literature. Students classify 6 sociological abstracts as micro-empirical, micro-theoretical, macro-empirical, or macro-theoretical. Small group sessions are followed by general discussion of the task. Students are then informed that the following question will appear on the next exam:

> Please read carefully the 6 sociology abstracts. Identify each abstract as belonging to one of the following categories: micro-empirical, micro-theoretical, macro-empirical, macro-theoretical. Explain briefly why you classified each abstract as you did; you may want to point out that some articles seem to fit the ideal types better than others.

A new sample of 6 abstracts is distributed to students two or three days prior to the exam date.

Case study materials are taken from several print sources in sociology and journalism; but common sense is examined by conducting a series of interviews on various social problem topics. The following test item is taken from the teaching section on social inequality:

> Students conducted a series of interviews on the nature of poverty. A small sample of 15 interviews provides a knowledge resource on common sense ideas about poverty. Assess the adequacy of interview statements to offer logical consistent line of reasoning for solutions or nonsolutions of the poverty problem.

The above three test items from sociology, journalism, and common sense illustrate some teaching techniques of structured inquiry.

All classroom activities are structured around the test items. Learning objectives and test items become one and the same. This approach is in sharp contrast to the conventional system of testing which assumes that students have acquired a broad range of new knowledge. The conventional test is a sampling of the many facts and ideas supposedly learned. From the small sample of test items, the conventional test infers a measure of total knowledge acquired by a student. A score of 80% from the sample indicates that 80% of the total population of worthwhile knowledge has been mastered. I approach the testing and sampling process differently. *Everything* considered worth knowing is placed up front on 12-15 exam items distributed in advance. The

sampling occurs on exam day by selecting randomly 4 questions. Exams are open book and students are encouraged to bring outlines and appropriate supporting evidence for each question. In short, the instructor teaches to the test and provides students with maximum opportunity to understand what is expected of them.

FOCUSED INQUIRY: DEVELOPING SKILLS OF CONTENT ANALYSIS

This teaching/learning option focuses on a specified social problems topic (e.g., the Mafia, lifestyles of the urban poor, gentrification). Two contrasting sources (e.g., articles from *Reader's Digest*, chapters from social problems textbooks, interviews with students or other adults) are identified which provides a rich sample of statements about the selected topic. Analytical questions and a hypothesis are proposed concerning similarities and differences between the two sources of social knowledge (e.g., "methods of acquiring information about the Mafia are equally difficult for journalists and sociologists; neither *Reader's Digest* nor sociology textbooks develop sound principles of inference to support generalizations about the Mafia"). Students then draw a small sample of statements (e.g., 10 *Reader's Digest* articles and ten textbook chapters) and analyze materials according to the guiding hypothesis. Finally, students are required to report their findings in a brief 4-6 page paper. Students sometimes write one paper as a special project (Baker, 1975); when focused inquiry is the semester learning option, students are expected to write 5 papers.

Focused inquiry begins as students determine a problem area for investigation. After a topic has been selected, students engage in preliminary research (e.g., read a chapter in a textbook, locate and read 3 sources from the *Reader's Guide*, construct and give an interview). At this point I meet with students in small groups to further develop their procedures of investigation. Students share their exploratory work and help each other design a small scale study to test an idea.

OPEN-ENDED INQUIRY: CONDUCTING INTENSIVE INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION

This teaching/learning option maximizes freedom to pursue original research. Students research one major paper as the sole semester assignment. Following basic analytical principles of comparing two types of social knowledge, students formulate their research question, identify comparative populations of social problem statements, draw a sample of resources, and analyze the data. This option requires careful planning and an explicit statement of purpose and procedure. Expectations of teacher and student are negotiated through a contract of independent study. Numerous students have pursued open-ended inquiry. Their projects of comparative epistemology have covered a wide range

of topics and resources. For example, two students studied recent sociological research on the double standard of sexual behavior; they then systematically examined statements on the same topic by Dear Abby and Playboy Advisor (Curtis and Spence, 1976). Another student compared sociological research and legal opinion on the anticipated impact of ERA on American social life (Drexel, 1978). Open-ended inquiry has often proved rewarding for instructor and student but both parties bring a great deal of motivation to the task and gladly pay the necessary price of time, energy, and frustration. Any researcher understands these trade-offs.

EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE: ASSESSING LEARNING OUTCOMES

I have presented a general instructional model and described three teaching techniques to accompany it. A basic question remains. To what extent can rational thinking be effectively taught to social problems students? A tentative answer to this question is provided by assessing learning outcomes with a pre-post test evaluative instrument. On the first day of class, students write a creative essay on a social problem. This identical assignment is then repeated as the final exam (see Baker and Jones, 1979 for further details on The Creative Reasoning Test). A basic assumption underlying this empirical assessment is the claim that students will develop creative reasoning skills by practicing critical reasoning skills on various case materials from common sense, journalism, and sociology.

On the first and last days of class, students create their own statements and are informed that there are no preconceived correct answers to various social problems. But the assignment does provide clarity of expectations by stipulating guidelines for analyzing a social problem. Students are asked to approach their writing task with four basic concerns: (1) define the nature of the problem; (2) examine various types of evidence which seem useful in understanding the problem; (3) stipulate various causes of the problem; (4) offer general as well as specific solutions to the problem. These four guidelines are crucial in assessing the logical adequacy of students' statement. Each is scored on a scale of 1-4 (1 = poor, 2 = average, 3 = good, 4 = superb), creating a total score of 16 for each essay.

The Creative Reasoning Test was administered to three social problems classes. Two were taught by Baker (N = 20; N = 22); the third class was taught by an instructor at another college (N = 13). The essays were scrambled to eliminate any distinction between pre- and post-tests. Baker and Jones independently scored each essay on three different occasions. The intracoder correlation coefficients for the second and third scores for Baker and Jones were .70 and .93, respectively. Intercoder reliability was consistently high for the three classes; correlation coefficients ranged

TABLE 1
Changes for Pre-Post Test Scores on Creative Reasoning Test

Pre-Post Score Changes	Class 1 (N=20)	Class 2 (N=22)	Class 3 (N=13)	Total (N=55)	Total Percentage (100%)
Significant Gain 4.00 or more points	8	5	5	18	33%
Modest Gain 2.00 to 3.50	6	8	3	17	30%
Minor Gain .50 to 1.50	3	5	3	11	20%
No Change	1	0	0	1	2%
Minor Loss -.50 to -1.50	1	4	2	7	13%
Modest Loss -2.00 to -3.50	1	0	0	1	2%
Significant Loss -4.00 or more	0	0	0	0	0%

from .96 to .74. A final score for each essay was determined by averaging the third score of each coder; for example, if Jones scored an essay 12 and Baker rated it 11, the final score would be 11.5.

Results from the three classes are tentative as conditions for an experimental design were not met. Students were not randomly selected for the classes and there were no control groups to assess nontreatment results. Nevertheless, the results are encouraging for those who hope to see students improve rational thinking skills. In all three classes, most students (63%) demonstrated modest or significant gains in their creative reasoning scores (see Table 1). Students who score highly on the pretest have little room for further improvement; two persons scored 12.5 or above on the pretest and were therefore unable to make significant gains. A few students (15%) actually regressed during the semester. Most of these students had modest or low scores that dropped slightly; there is only one instance of an above average student who declined sharply at the time of the final.

The results reported in Table 1 are consistent with numerous empirical studies conducted during the past half-century. Teachers who self-consciously promote critical thinking skills repeatedly demonstrate success. When pre-post tests are administered, students consistently improve their performance scores on specific critical thinking skills. These scores will be higher than in comparable classrooms where critical reasoning skills are not explicitly emphasized (Logan, 1976). In other words, students who are taught by conventional expository methods do not acquire skills of critical thinking as a necessary by-product of their exposure to social science information (see Baker, 1979a for a detailed review of this literature).

CONCLUSION

Sociologists often espouse the values of rational thinking as integral to their curriculum (McPherron and Bradshaw, 1980). The above preliminary findings and similar studies demonstrate success in teaching these important goals. Why then has so little attention been given to rational thinking models of instruction in such basic courses as social problems? The answer can be summarized as organizational constraints. Many sociology teachers work under the constraints of heavy teaching loads and large classes. Teachers in research-oriented universities have lighter teaching loads, but other professional priorities often reduce their undergraduate teaching commitment to minimal effort. Teaching rational thinking is often perceived as a luxury that department budgets can ill afford. Few rewards are offered to teachers of basic courses for performing the kind of labor-intensive work needed to cultivate rational thinking.

Another factor which helps explain the dearth of rational thinking in the social problems course is the commerical production and distribution of curricular literature. Given the organizational constraints confronting teachers, publishers approach their market much as manufacturers of automobiles and appliances. Just as one purchases an auto or a refrigerator with the expectation that it is reliable and free of inconvenient breakdowns, faculty members want fail-safe text literature. Students may purchase the books, but marketing decisions are made by the teachers. Publishers respond to this fact by promising teachers trouble-free commodities. The most controlled and comforting trouble-free curriculum is packaged in textbooks with glossaries and photos, student workbooks, and a test bank of objective test items. These commercially successful products are used in labor extensive teaching arrangements which systematically avoid critical and creative thinking. This trouble-free literature leads teachers and students to assume that all statements are adequate; the only question of adequacy concerns the students' capacity to comprehend and memorize the material.

Evidence of success in teaching rational thinking is not sufficient to change current teaching/learning systems. Teachers must be willing to engage in the same critical and creative thinking they ideally expect from their students. All members of a democratic society who attempt to be well informed about social issues confront perplexity. Given the tough-minded problems of the twentieth century, teaching students to become well-informed citizens is never trouble-free. The imagination, energy, and motivation must start with the teacher. This necessarily involves taking a few risks, learning from mistakes, and growing with students. With a little luck, early anxieties and frustrations will yield new excitement and genuine appreciation from students. Teaching social problems gains new purpose, and cultivating rational thinking becomes a contagious experience.

NOTE

1. This work is available as Social Awareness Modules for each of the seven social problems topics mentioned above. The Teaching Resources Center of the American Sociological Association is distributing the modules at minimum cost.

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CHAPTER 2

INVITATION TO SOCIAL AWARENESS

Portions of this chapter were written in collaboration with Charlotte Vaughan. We are grateful for her stimulating contributions.

PROBING SOCIAL PROBLEMS

We are living in the late afternoon of the twentieth century. Concerned citizens are perplexed by social issues which defy simple explanation or quick solution. This essay is an invitation to probe a new understanding of contemporary social issues. While sociology does offer a valuable perspective it does not provide self-contained conclusions about the current social problems which plague modern societies. This invitation to social awareness complements the sociology perspective with 2 additional points of view: common everyday opinions and journalism.

I invite you to explore the nature and meaning of social issues by looking through 3 pairs of glasses. One pair observes common sense. The second pair provides power to see the images and ideas of journalism found on any newsstand. The third pair, the lens of sociology, may appear out of focus and need adjustment from time to time. Some students suggest that the optical formula of common sense and sociology is strikingly similar. These glasses, when interchanged, may cause temporary visual difficulties but with practice will provide an extended vision of the social world.

The study of social problems from these 3 perspectives prepares readers to understand both the social world of today and that of the future. Long after this essay is discarded journalism and common sense will provide an understanding of social problems. With the passing of time and the fading of memory most of the sociological ideas in this essay will have dissolved into a general muddle commonly known as college years. I take seriously the ubiquitous worlds of conventional wisdom and journalism because they are the sustaining knowledge systems which inform modern citizens. These central beliefs provide the guiding philosophy of this essay.

Common sense ideas, journalistic accounts, and social research often share a common agenda for probing social problems. This is illustrated by a criminal episode which occurred in Philadelphia. On Palm Sunday in 1966 3 men broke into the home of an 80 year old widow, her 44 year old daughter, and 14 year old granddaughter. The intruders viciously beat and raped the women and looted and ransacked the house. "The grandmother was found unconscious by the police and lying in a pool of blood." She later died from wounds (Schwartz, 1968:509).

Newspapers covered the story extensively; editors called for new measures to protect women in their homes and on the streets. Public outrage created by this heineous crime had a powerful impact on the public officials of Pennsylvania. Judges clamped down on all defendants accused of crimes leading to bodily injury. Within 3 weeks state legislators considered passing new laws which would double existing penalties for rape. By votes of 48-0 and 202-0 the Senate and House amended the Pennsylvania Penal Code by requiring harsher penalties for rape and attempted rape. Five weeks after banner headlines first reported the crime the governor signed the new law. Those convicted of rape with bodily injury now faced a minimum of 15 years to life imprisonment; the maximum sentence for attempted rape or rape without injury was increased sharply also.

Newspapers reported citizen satisfaction over the swift action of politicians. One legislator who sponsored the new crime laws summarized the views of many people:

> The passage of this bill is a major breakthrough in the fight on crime throughout the State and especially in Philadelphia, and will bring about a definite deterrent on future rapists. When the word is circulated among these vicious criminals that they will be swiftly and severely punished; when they get the message that our organized society will not tolerate the violation of our women, these men will think twice before committing these uncivilized acts (Schwartz, 1968:510).

The conventional wisdom of editors, newspaper readers, judges, legislators, and other concerned citizens seemed obvious. A terrible crime had been committed and appropriate action had to be taken. If existing sanctions did not deter rapists then it was believed that stricter punishment would. Everyone was convinced that the problem had been correctly defined and the solution appropriately found.

Although sociologists were not prominent in the public demand for stricter laws they were by training less willing to believe in such solutions for criminal conduct as "15 years to life imprisonment." Sociologist Barry Schwartz investigated the actual impact the new laws had. He was interested in knowing whether the new penalties did in fact deter the rate of attempted rape and rape in Philadelphia. "If the new law had a desirable effect, a perceptible drop in the monthly rape rates could be expected after May 12, 1966 or even in April, the period of greatest public outrage in which much well-publicized planning for the new penalties took place" (1968:510). Schwartz unearthed inconvenient facts which raised serious doubts about the deterrent effect as he probed the matter more systematically than most journalists and ordinary citizens. While Schwartz shared the same compassion for rape victims as did judges, legislators, and newspaper editors, he did not define the problem with assurance of a quick solution.

Through investigation of police and court records Schwartz discovered that the identical number of rapes was committed in Philadelphia during 1965 and 1966. He probed for a pattern of change over the previous 8 years. His findings were unequivocal: "The proportion of forcible rapes by adult offenders has not declined" (1968:512). Contrary to the hopes of public officials Schwartz concluded that "Pennsylvania's new deterrent strategy against rape was a failure as far Philadelphia is concerned" (1968:514).

This case study of an atrocious crime followed by swift and severe legislation illustrates the styles of thought found in the perspectives of conventional wisdom, journalism, and sociology. The common sense solution offered by legislators was based on the premise that penalty deters crime. It seemed reasonable that severe penalty would have greater deterrent effect. Journalists

assumed their appropriate role regarding the crime. They reported the deliberations by legislators and the governor and responded editorially. Sociologists reassessed the taken-for-granted truth that more severe penalty yields less crime. By making systematic statistical comparisons before and after the amended penal code was signed into law sociologists could determine the effectiveness of increased penalty for rape. These findings were reported in a sociological journal and gained little or no attention from most Philadelphia citizens who still believe that stricter law enforcement solves street crime.

Private Troubles and Public Issues

Distinguished sociologist and social critic C. Wright Mills called attention to the modern dichotomy between "private troubles" and "public issues." "Troubles occur within the character of the individual and within the range of his immediate relations with others" (1959:8). The scope of troubles represents the provincial arena of family, friends, neighbors, classmates, and the local church. According to Mills, people endure the endless agony of defeat, failure, and a sense of personal crisis on this level. Issues, on the other hand, "have to do with matters that transcend the local environments of the individual and the range of his inner life. . . . An issue is a public matter" (1959:8). It concerns the structural and institutional arrangements of nation states which create such problems as unemployment, war, urban decay, and racial conflict. Mills points out that public issues are not the accumulation of private troubles. "Insofar as an economy is so arranged that slumps occur, the problem of unemployment becomes incapable of personal solution. Insofar as the family as an institution turns women into darling little slaves and men into their chief providers and unweaned dependents, the problem of a satisfactory marriage remains incapable of purely private solution" (1959:10).

This social duality is experienced by everyone with degrees of self-consciousness. Mills challenges his colleagues to cultivate a self-conscious "capacity to shift from one perspective to another--from the political to the psychological; from examination of a single family to comparative assessment of national budgets of the world" (1959:7). Such quality of intellect is part of the classical tradition of sociology. It is rightfully acknowledged as the sociological imagination.

Mills' distinction between "private troubles" and "public issues" has helped a generation of sociologists recognize the dual domains of private and public affairs. This modern duality which illustrates the simultaneous awareness of private troubles and public issues is seen in the Palm Sunday crime episode. Many Philadelphians suddenly experienced new anxiety about personal safety. They took new precaution by locking their doors and staying off streets. Their concern was not limited to the immediate risks of their neighborhood; they also demanded that personal safety be considered a public issue. Legislators throughout the state gave unanimous approval for revision of the penal code. The private troubles of Philadelphia residents were transformed into new public policies for the entire state.

In retrospect in this instance most journalists and public officials in Pennsylvania did not exercise the sociological imagination. However, it has been developed richly by distinguished journalists and other articulate twentieth century citizens. Newspaper reporters Bernstein and Woodward provide a dramatic example of such journalists in their investigation of Watergate, All the President's Men, which created the climate for extensive journalistic appraisal of public issues.

I propose a modification of Mills' "private troubles" and "public issues" arguing that each distinction t[illegible] a range of concerns. "Private troubles," which I relabel "private affairs," no longer focuses exclusively on the difficulties of private life. And while not changing Mills' concept of "public issues" its meaning is extended to include constructive as well as disruptive policy matters. The media covers inaugurations as well as impeachment hearings. There are public moments when politicians commit government resources to social security, Medicare, the G.I. Bill, unemployment compensation, and food stamps and other occasions when some of the same politicians attack welfare as fraudulent and wasteful.

Preoccupied by the anxiety of private life and the crisis of public institutions Mills stressed the negative side of social life. While not denying the harsh realities of his dark vision the terms private affairs and public issues suggest a broader domain. Borrowing a metaphor from anthropologist Paul Bohannan, modern complex societies can be thought of as "two story cultures" with a large-scale world upstairs, predominantly economic and political and a small-scale world downstairs comprised of family and neighbors. Sociologists, journalists, and ordinary citizens live in the same two-story house; it is natural for them to chatter about both floors of their living space. The sociological imagination facilitates the capacity to step outside the house and view simultaneously both floors and the connecting staircase. Through sociology one can envision both private and public realms with their many interrelated parts.

It is the rare intellectual who penetrates the mysteries of social problems at both the personal and public levels. In this respect C. Wright Mills recognized such sociologists as Karl Marx, Max Weber, Thorstein Veblen, and Emile Durkheim as well as the sociological brilliance of American journalist Walter Lippmann. Other dististinguished journalists and sociologists are W. E. B. DuBois, Gunner Myrdal, Robert Park, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Edward R. Morrow, and Patrick Moynihan. Most sociologists and journalists concentrate their energies on either the micro level of interpersonal affairs or macro level of societal institutions. There is a long-standing written tradition in both sociology and journalism that elaborates these distinct social worlds. During the twentieth century, journalists and sociologists have probed the social problems of their time. Attention is now given to 7 social issues which provide the substantive topics of the social awareness modules.

Perennial Problems Which Span the Twentieth Century

A survey of contemporary social problems yields an endless laundry list: abortion, aging, alienated youth, child abuse, corruption, pollution, prison reform, rest home ripoffs, terrorism, women's liberation, T.V. violence. Journalists respond to these concerns through articles on dramatic episodes, new laws, tragic victims, and zealous reformers. Sociologists take up the challenge with surveys, learned papers, and scholarly books. The public is exposed to a wealth of information and opinion about social problems. This essay is not a comprehensive but hopefully a more modest and intelligible summary of contemporary social ills.

Seven such social issues have occupied the attention of scholars, journalists, and laypeople for decades: (1) social inquality, (2) changing sex roles, (3) race relations, (4) population/pollution, (5) urban crisis, (6) crime and delinquency, (7) bureaucracy. These social issues are examined from the perspectives of common sense, journalism, and sociology. Limitations on the articulation and solution to social issues by each perspective are noted also.

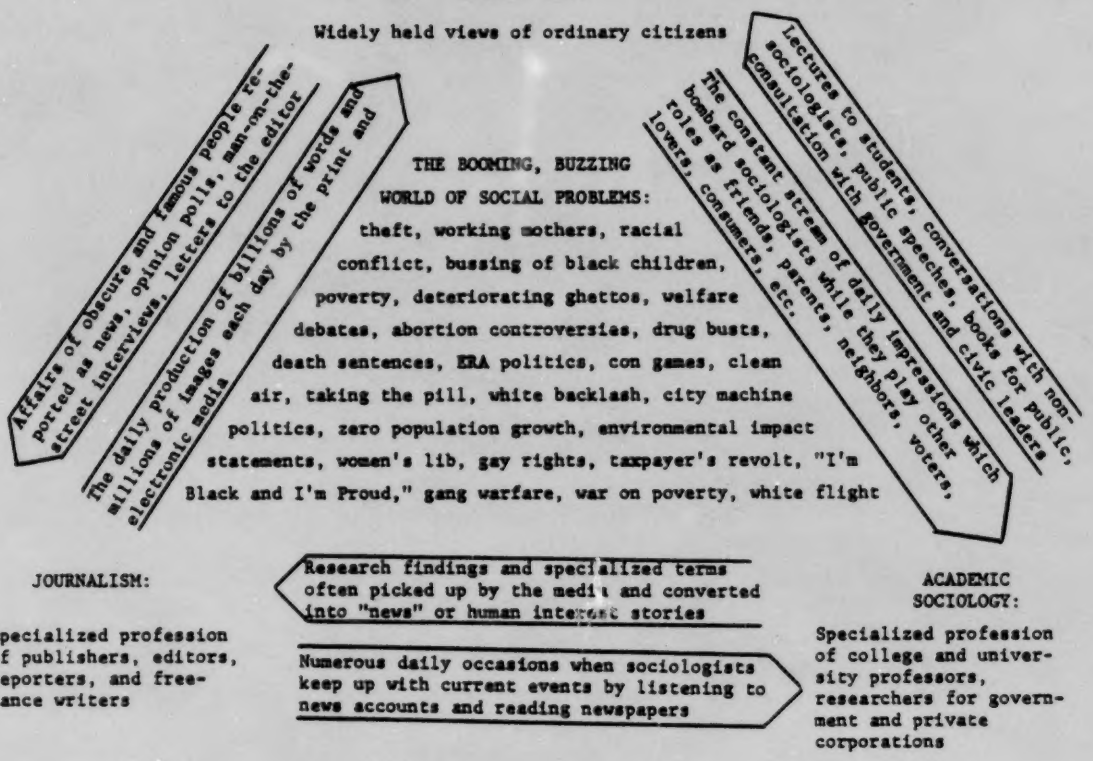
The framework for journalists is provided by common ideas and opinions about social issues. Sociologists pursue social issues through common opinion as well as the powerful word and image machines of the press and mass media. Since these 3 perspectives of social thought interrelate it is important to understand their mutual dependency. It is important also to conceptualize a social problem in the context of its current history. Figure 1 depicts the circulation of images, ideas, and impressions of social problems in a triangle of action and reaction. Whether thoughts about social problems are visual, or in print they are exchanged among persons from all walks of life.

The first phase of narrowing this inquiry limits topics to 7 social issues found in the following diagram. After exploring conventional wisdom and journalism generally 1 micro topic and 1 macro topic of sociology are examined. No review is made of all sociological work relevant to a social issue. Focus on 7 social issues will provide depth in 14 areas of sociological scholarship.

Social Issue	Micro	Macro
Social Inequality	Life Styles of Classes	Poverty and the Social Welfare System
Changing Sex Roles	Division of Labor within the Family	Sex and Occupational Structure
Race Relations	Black Family	Desegregration Policies and Black Advancement
Population/Pollution	Family Planning	Growing Population and Environmental Impact
Urban Crisis	Neighborhoods	Changing Central Cities
Crime and Delinquency	Drug Addiction	Laws on Drug Use
Bureaucracy	Human Relations in Work Settings	Bureaucratization as a Societal Trend

Figure 1

Social Issues and the Moving Triangle of Common Sense, Journalism, and Sociology


COMMON SENSE
Widely held views of ordinary citizens
Affairs of obscure and famous people reported as news, opinion polls, man-on-the-street interviews, letters to the editor
The daily production of billions of words and millions of images each day by the print and electronic media
Lectures to students, conversations with non-sociologists, public speeches, books for public consultation with government and civic leaders
The constant stream of daily impressions which bombard sociologists while they play other roles as friends, parents, neighbors, voters, lovers, consumers, etc.
THE BOOMING, BUZZING WORLD OF SOCIAL PROBLEMS:
theft, working mothers, racial conflict, bussing of black children, poverty, deteriorating ghettos, welfare debates, abortion controversies, drug busts, death sentences, ERA politics, con games, clean air, taking the pill, white backlash, city machine politics, zero population growth, environmental impact statements, women's lib, gay rights, taxpayer's revolt, "I'm Black and I'm Proud," gang warfare, war on poverty, white flight
JOURNALISM:
Specialized profession of publishers, editors, reporters, and free-lance writers
Research findings and specialized terms often picked up by the media and converted into "news" or human interest stories
Numerous daily occasions when sociologists keep up with current events by listening to news accounts and reading newspapers
ACADEMIC SOCIOLOGY:
Specialized profession of college and university professors, researchers for government and private corporations

The micro/macro distinction corresponds to the dual levels of private affairs and public issues. Whether the topic is gangs, black families, or city neighborhoods the focus is on intimate circles of friends, kinfolk, and local communities. Small social settings of families and neighborhoods relate to larger social structures such as municipal governments or business corporations. Sociologists often study micro worlds as autonomous social groups. Macro analysis concentrates on political and economic affairs such as school desegregation, abortion, or the death penalty and involves decisions which effects many people. Large-scale institutions are subject to change when various power groups seek to transform the social order.

Even the sum total of common sense, journalism and sociology do not add up to an understanding of twentieth century American social problems. Attention must be given to the historical context of these social issues. The past is prologue to the present and future and therefore appropriate reference will be made to historical moments. A sense of history helps clarify issues which continue to challenge concerned citizens.

The Multiple Realities of Social Problems

A social problem has many faces. Like a huge crystal ball it refracts light in dozens of directions at any given moment. The issue of race relations illustrates the difficulty of being able to understand a social problem in its entirety.

During the past 100 years endless words and images have expressed the experiences of urban black people. Journalists write of riots, black gangs, frightful schools, and high crime rates; sociologists have interviewed scores of people and condensed their impressions to tables, charts, and thousands of pages of detail (e.g., W. E. B. DuBois, Philadelphia Negro; Cayton and Drake, Black Metropolis; Rainwater, Behind Ghetto Walls); film directors create typical urban street scenes for such movies as Blackboard Jungle, Cooley High, and Shaft; and writers capture the human drama of hope and frustration in the city through such novels as The Invisible Man, Native Son, and Manchild in the Promised Land, and such plays as Raisin in the Sun. Perhaps no one has placed so much meaning in so few words as the distinguished black poetess, Gwendolyn Brooks, in her poem We Real Cool (Brooks, 1970:337).

WE REAL COOL
The Pool Players.
Seven at the Golden Shovel.

We real cool. We
Left school. We

Lurk late. We
Strike straight. We

Sing sin. We
Thin gin. We

Jazz June. We
Die soon.

Each account enriches our understanding of urban life for black Americans. However, neither individually nor collectively can sociologists, journalists, or poets grasp the problem in its entirety. Occasionally a rare genius uses several media systems to speak out on racial conflict. W. E. B. DuBois was equally successful in sociology, journalism, drama, and history. Similarly Gordon Park, Sr., black journalist for Life magazine was an accomplished novelist and film director (see The Learning Tree).

The total truth about social problems is always elusive. Given the partiality of human knowledge and the impossibility of finding absolute answers in a pluralistic society, one must acknowledge the incompleteness of any discussion about social problems. While this assessment of social problems is partial it is guided by 2 elementary ideas about social reality. First, social existence is perceived along a continuum from small groups (friends and family) to societal units (nation states and multi-national corporations). Academicians, pundits, and friends at the local bar all grasp the difference in magnitude between the intimate quarrels of lovers and the diplomatic struggles of superpowers. The second idea about social reality is that it is constructed along a continuum from concrete to abstract. Every person--simple peasant to learned scholar--has infinite experiences out of which impressions of the universe are shaped: the laughter of friends, the anguish of pain, adolescent sexual drives, the sadness of death, the first news of war, or an assassination. Gradeschool dropouts as well as Ph.D. recipients generalize from their direct experiences. One is exposed to second-hand accounts of concrete experiences through a network of gossip, novels, television, newspapers, or the 10 top hits. But humans are not limited to the immediate experiences of human affairs; numerous generalizations exist in the symbolic universe. The Bible is replete with moral principles and proverbs. For centuries young men have been warned against the temptations of wine and women:

> For the lips of a loose woman drip honey,
> and her speech is smoother than oil;
> but in the end she is bitter as wormwood,
> sharp as a two-edged sword.
>
> Proverbs 5:3-4

Contemporary language is rich with its words of wisdom: "a house divided against itself cannot stand," "leaders at the top occupy a lonely position." All professions and fields of employment (e.g., law, public administration, coaching) generate their particular list of postulates intended to be applied to thousands of concrete situations: "a winning coach cultivates intense team loyalty, ambition to win, and willing sense of cooperation among the players." The MIT physicist Jerroed Zacharias asserts that scientists "always work from specific examples, however simple or complex, to the awesome generality." This scientific claim is germane to many other types of knowledge. Science differs only in its rigorous methods for establishing laws and theories.

Social problems then can be understood regarding the scope of inquiry (microscopic to macroscopic) and the degree of generality (concrete to abstract). Common sense, journalism, and sociology vary in scope and degree of abstraction and are employed to gather and test knowledge in characteristic ways. This essay compares and contrasts each perspective as it is applied to social issues.

CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMON SENSE

One shares taken-for-granted ideas about life. Accumulated wisdom makes daily living possible without thinking about every detail. Everyone knows that high crime rates as well as oily scum, dead fish, and garbage in a river prove the existence of social problems. Soap operas, advice columns, and casual conversation provide abundant evidence that most women are not content alone with spotless silver or chauffeur duty. Common sense knowledge is transmitted by cliches often summarized by emotionally-charged phrases such as successful living, human decency, materialistic society, and true friend.

Common sense knowledge varies from time to time and place to place but each person picks up what is appropriate locally. Consider the matter of jokes. Blue collar men at a local tavern enjoy stories about the farmer's daughter and the traveling salesman but among a mixed company of professionals men must be cautious about making comments which may be labeled sexist. Policemen in large cities use their common sense to selectively enforce laws in different ethnic neighborhoods. Officers know that the definition of noise which disturbs the peace is radically different in subdued Swedish neighborhoods than in lively Italian or black communities.

Societies and their subgroups differ in ways of speaking, eating, behaving, and solving everyday problems but each has customary ways. Generally these ways are adopted without much conscious reflection; people have a built-in vision of the world which helps to locate what is important.

Although the actual beliefs and ways of coping with the world may differ from group to group common sense knowledge shares certain characteristics.* It pre-exists in the social environment into which one is born. Ideas exist prior to one's birth: "a college education is necessary to get ahead," "men don't cry," "women giggle a lot." Similar ideas will exist for the next generation.

*This discussion draws from Alfred Schutz, On Phenomenology and Social Relations, ed. Helmut R. Wagner (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970, Chapters 2-5, 11-12; Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., Anchor Books, 1967), Chapter I; Max Scheler, "The Sociology of Knowledge: Formal Problems," translated by Rainer Koehne, in The Sociology of Knowledge: A Reader, ed. James E. Curtis and John W. Petras (New York: Praeger Publishers, Inc., 1970:170-186); and Ernest Negel, The Structure of Science (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1961:1-14).

Common sense knowledge is intersubjective and shared with those around us. For example, an accidental encounter by a middle class person with an alcoholic panhandler is an unpleasant experience; likewise, each Halloween many parents share common anxiety about the wierdo who places razor blades in apples and poison in candy. Common sense is the common knowledge of everyday that is taken for granted. We do not subject it to any special test.

It is practical knowledge and relevant to situations in which we find ourselves: do not walk alone at night; do not park in a no parking zone longer than one-half hour. It is useful knowledge and without it we would find it difficult to cope. These practical solutions tend to be routine recipes with a cookbook character: a successful job interview requires a new suit, shined shoes, neat appearance, pleasant conversation, and crisp answers to tough questions. When economic times are good the job-seeking recipe often works.

Most cookbooks provide precise recipes whereas the common sense knowledge of social affairs is vague and general. There are no clear limits as to when and where common sense applies. Faced with a new situation we cast about the bank of common sense ideas for a solution. If it works we accept its validity. If it does not then we believe that we have applied it incorrectly. When we believe that Englishmen are reserved and meet one who is outgoing then our knowledge just does not happen to fit him. The general and vague nature of common sense knowledge makes it hard to falsify. Cases which do not fit do not test the general rule so they can be explained away.

Common sense knowledge tends to be inconsistent and unsystematic. Since one seldom reflects on this knowledge or examines its totality inconsistencies and contradictions tend to go unnoticed: honesty is the best policy (but everyone takes supplies from work); be considerate of other people (but look out for number one). Common sense knowledge consists of bits and pieces of taken-for-granted wisdom rather than a body of logically coherent knowledge. We tend to select knowledge that is needed immediately and not regard the harmony between knowledge in different situations.

In summary the common sense world of knowledge tends to pre-exist, be intersubjective, taken-for granted, practical, routine, vague and general, and inconsistent and unsystematic. Some knowledge is shared with society in general and some with our particular subgroups. Stereotypes which illustrate the social character of common sense understanding are now considered.

Stereotypes

Stereotypes contain common sense knowledge and expectations about members of a particular category such as blacks, Jews, women, criminals, politicians, poor people, physicians, or Swedes. These expectations contain a pre-evaluation of a group and presuppose that their anticipated traits are innate. In order to understand the role that stereotypes play in our thinking about social issues we need to recognize them as categories and evaluators.

It is impossible to understand the complicated world without making generalizations. One lumps actions, people, and things in general categories having underlying similarities. It is simpler to sort people into categories of friend, acquaintance, or stranger than to determine how to deal with them individually.

A stereotype defines a category and sorts out the world. However, a stereotype is a set of expectations that may define people in a category but does not define all people. Stereotypes are based on insufficient evidence about the experience of a few "of us" with a few "of them" in a few situtions. Stereotypes are overgeneralized categories. Walter Lippman, who first coined the term stereotype, nonetheless observes, "There is economy in this. For the attempt to see all things freshly and in detail, rather than as types and generalities, is exhausting, and among busy affairs practically out of the question" (1922:88).

Stereotypes are ethnocentric. While many social categories--union organizers, working wives, farmers, homosexuals--are emotionally loaded, stereotypes have a particular emotional quality. Traits expected to be exhibited by members of a certain category are evaluated in terms of "our ways". Our ways are good, and the ways of other people, if they differ from ours, are bad. Evaluation often is made by people who hold a position of power or dominance. In evaluating men as logical (good) and women as emotional (bad) the evaluator speaks from a dominant male position.

Stereotypes exaggerate characteristics assumed to be intrinsic qualities of certain people. Although there is no current evidence that traits are linked genetically some people believe that blacks are musical or women illogical as a result of biological heritage. The use of stereotypes implies harmful intent and therefore they carry a negative social connotation. Ethnocentrism and the notion of innateness, often associated with stereotypes, increase group tension and make stereotypes especially volatile (Brown, 1965:181).

Three studies of Princeton college students in 1932, 1950, and 1967 illustrate common stereotypes and their consequent change over time. In 1932 Princeton students characterized the English as "sportsmanlike, intelligent, and conventional" while the Irish were "pugnacious, quick-tempered, and witty" (Katz and Brady, 1933:280-290). They considered Jews "shrewd, mercenary, industrious, and grasping," while blacks were characterized as "superstitious, lazy, happy-go-lucky, and ignorant." There was considerable agreement among Princeton students about these characterizations. In 1950 few changes were noted but the characterizations were less emphatic (Gilbert, 1951:245-254). A number of students protested the study on the basis that it was unreasonable to expect them to generalize about whole groups of people. The researcher interpreted his findings as a "fading-out" of the common stereotypes in the 18 years between the studies. In the 1967 study students gave more positive reaction toward Jews and less flattering assessment of Americans than had the 1932 generation (Karlins, Coffman, & Walters, 1969:1-16). The predominant characterization of blacks was "musical" while whites were more often considered "materialistic" and less often "industrious" and "intelligent." The researchers suggested that the old stereotypes were fading and new ones were developing.

There is some doubt that the old stereotypes are fading. In a 1971 study at the University of Rochester researchers attached to some of their subjects an electronic device purported to register accurate attitudes through measuring physiological responses (Sigal and Page, 1971:247-255). While the machine did nothing but look impressive the subjects thought it was a truth machine. Consequently students expressed more negative attitudes toward blacks and more positive attitudes toward whites than did students not attached to the machine. The researchers now suggest that there may be a little fading and a little faking since it is not acceptable to express national or ethnic stereotypes.

In his major work on prejudice Gordon Allport points out that the content of stereotypes changes over time in accord with interests of the people making the stereotype (1958:198):

> They wax and wane with the intensity and direction of prejudice. They also . . . obediently follow the conversational situation. The Russian, judged at a time when the Soviet government and the United States were wartime allies, was seen as rugged, brave, and patriotic. Within a few years the picture changed so that he appeared fierce, aggressive, and fanatic. Meanwhile the unfavorable images of the Japanese (and Japanese-Americans) altered and softened.

Whether or not one consciously accepts stereotypes they distort one's thinking. A social psychologist reports how he was influenced unconsciously by common sense thinking (Aronson, 1972:177-178). While writing about persuasion Aronson states that women are easier than men to persuade. He bases his argument on a study in which women changed their minds about certain topics more often than men did after exposure to persuasive material. A female colleague called attention to his choice of topics which typically hold less interest for women but tend to result in strong opinions by men in our society. Aronson had overlooked this possibility by stereotyping females as gullible.

If one accepts the notion that poor people are lazy, do not want to work, and are improvident and then applies these evaluations to all poor people in all circumstances, the cause of the problem and the implication of a course of action are defined. When character defects of poor people are perceived to cause poverty than the possible social circumstances which might change the condition of poor people are not examined. Ignored are the limited prospects for gainful employment such as availability of jobs, exploitation, or individual conditions, such as age and illness. If one believes that blacks are innately inferior to whites then one ignores equal opportunity practices and believes that blacks and whites are unequal in attributes. Stereotypes of criminals, urban residents, policemen, and big business also imply specific causes of social issues and consequent courses of action. The issue of changing sex roles has become a challenge to male and female stereotypes.

Common sense knowledge pre-exists, is inter-subjective, and taken for granted among friends and acquaintances. It is illustrated by stereotypes which are practical recipes for relating to others through categories rather than individual differences. Stereotypes provide a guide for interaction with the unfamiliar. When someone does not fit a stereotype the person becomes an exception to the general rule. When stopped by policemen most people prepare to be treated officially and impersonally; when policemen are warm and congenial the exception proves the rule. Stereotypes tend to be inconsistent and unsystematic. The same traits may be evaluated in a different manner for different categories. To use a familiar example the positive characteristics of frugality, thriftiness, industriousness, and perseverance attributed to Abraham Lincoln have been attributed negatively to Jews as stinginess, miserliness, and having a sweatshop mentality (Merton, 1968:428).

In a complex and diversified society such as the United States, people think in stereotypes. Movies, television, magazines, and newspapers offer typical images of communities, professions, life situations, and regions that are impossible to know first hand. The electronic media and newsprint display impressions of private detectives, Southerners, and army sergeants without a prerequisite benefit of working on criminal cases, living in the South, or joining the Army. Not all farmers are independent, hard-working, and practical but these characteristics help one understand the typical rural lifestyle. Lippmann cautions that when stereotypes are used one must learn "to know that they are only stereotypes, to hold them lightly, to modify them gladly (1922:90-91).

Dimensions of Common Sense Thinking:Micro/Macro; Concrete/Abstract

Micro/Macro. Personal relationships sustain human existence. People are bound together in relatively small groups of 2, 20, or 200. People pair up to date, marry, enjoy a coffee break, share a dorm room, do a lab experiment, or gossip. Miniature worlds of 2 often expand to 3, 4, or 5 when we double date, have children, play poker, or a attend a family reunion. People enter close networks in schools, churches, neighborhoods, fraternities, sororities, civic groups and a host of other small-scale groups. These social settings facilitate personal familiarity with daily and significant events. Word spreads fast when the first black family moves to an all-white neighborhood; the marital problems of neighbors often are exposed beyond their 4 walls; and, when the garbage is not collected, a city hall labor dispute becomes evident. C. Wright Mills refers to micro social problems as private troubles.

People are not frozen at 1 level of social consciousness but able to acknowledge the social groups which transcend their family, friends, and local community. Modern human discourse constructs images about labor unions, the medical profession, city, state, and federal bureaucracies, giant corporations, regions of the country, nation states, continents, and the world order. The language about these large social entities is often imprecise and the generalizations frequently sweeping: "The AMA is right when it opposes welfare schemes of socialized medicine"; "labor unions

have ruined New York City"; "since the Northeast is energy starved it will continue to suffer economic decline"; "world population is out of control and disaster is inevitable." Everyday language such as "city hall," "the media," "public opinion," "the military establishment," "conglomerates," "the Mafia," or "Catholic hierarchy" identifies social structures as constraining and directing forces and etches a remote social terrain. The social vision of ordinary citizens is not limited to parochial affairs. As people construct images of total societies they perceive giant forces of power, economic development, national security, social welfare, war, and peace.

Concrete/Abstract. A second aspect of common sense concerns the degree of generality with which people express ideas. At one extreme people recount in vivid detail experiences such as seeing a fire, watching teenagers steal a bicycle, or witnessing the aftermath of a race riot. These concrete experiences are recalled as unique events having a specific time and place. At the other extreme people generalize rather abstractly such as "buildings are burned to collect insurance," "our permissive society lets young people get away with murder," or "riots happen because of low moral standards in the ghetto." Millions of Americans viewed on TV the 1968 Democratic Convention when Chicago policemen were pitted against student radicals protesting the Vietnam War. The concrete events were dramatic and powerful but the experience of citizens was not limited to speech making, shouting, beating, and tear gas. People also thought about the events in broader categories of law and order, moral decay, and subversive conspiracies. In the minds of many viewers this particular incident was an example of a more general pattern of young radicals conspiring to destroy American institutions and of law enforcement agencies restraining un-American activities.

The 2 dimensions of common sense thinking (micro/macro and concrete/abstract) are independent of each other yet also related. Figure #2 demonstrates the relationship between the 2 dimensions. People have concrete impressions of both small and large social entities (e.g., the local precinct and the Cook County Democratic machine); they also understand abstract generalizations at both the micro and macro levels (e.g., delinquency is caused by broken homes and high crime rates are related to poverty). On different occasions and for different reasons people possess varying degrees of abstract or global vision. A priest administering last rites to an injured soldier does not use the occasion to explain American foreign policy since the Truman Doctrine. Nor do citizens who attempt to understand the American expenditure of billions of dollars and thousands of lives in Korea and Vietnam ignore general policy issues such as the collapsing colonial empires of France and England, the rising power of Red China, and the political instability of developing nations. General policy questions do not lead to bereavement over a friend slain on Asian battlefields. Common sense allows one to think of global strategies in global terms.

Figure 2

Ways of Knowing: Common Sense

DEGREE OF GENERALITY	SCOPE OF AWARENESS: MICRO	SCOPE OF AWARENESS: MACRO
CONCRETE: Awareness of specific events at a particular time and place. Unique occurrences understood in their uniqueness	Small scale social structures and social settings Micro-concrete Example (1) knowledge about a funeral of soldier killed in war (2) knowing a friend who had an abortion	Large scale social structures and social settings Macro-concrete Example (1) reading or hearing about a new bombing campaign against the enemy (2) reading or hearing about the Supreme Court decision on abortion
ABSTRACT: General principles and ideas which are believed to be true and which explain numerous (if not all) specific instances	Micro-abstract Example (1) trying to understand why some soldiers were successfully brainwashed by the enemy (2) thinking about the moral dilemmas and ultimate questions about abortion or keeping the baby	Macro-abstract Example (1) debating global theories of foreign policy--socialist vs. capitalist ideologies (2) gaining an understanding of the current policy debates between contending parties in the abortion controversy

CHARACTERISTICS OF JOURNALISM

Journalism is a special way of knowing and journalists are a special breed of knowledge producers. They actively seek stories which have public interest. Journalists are concerned with timeliness, newsworthiness, and marketing a story. They select events, report the events, and interpret findings. Their products help construct the world and give it meaning. Journalism has importance in a complex society because only a portion of the social world is experienced directly. Shibutani (1966:41) states that "news of all kinds, from significant to trivial, constitutes the basis for maintaining a working orientation toward a changing environment."

There are many forms of journalism (radio, television, magazines, newspapers, books, film documentaries) at different levels of sophistication (tabloids and pulp magazines or The New York Times and The New Yorker). While many modern media forms are worth careful study this essay focuses on the 3 most popular published types of journalism in the United States: (1) daily newspapers, (2) weekly magazines, (3) the Reader's Digest. They inform millions of Americans about happenings near and far and influence profoundly the knowledge, beliefs, and world views about current social problems.

The Daily Newspaper

Despite the popularity of television, newspapers remain the major source of national and local news. Howard Ehrlich reports on a study conducted by Audits and Surveys (1973:145-146):

> Newspaper reading among persons eighteen years old and older is twice as frequent as the viewing of the early evening network television newscasts. In fact, over a two-week period, 53 percent of the public do not see a single newscast. In contrast, almost 90 percent of adults read at least one daily newspaper during the week.

Newspapers are read by most Americans and contain more news than television and radio. "If one were to typeset the average 30-minute TV newscast, the copy would not fill a single newspaper page" (1973:146).

In tracing the natural history of newspapers Robert Park notes that "the first newspapers were simply devices for organizing gossip, and that, to a greater or less extent, they have remained" (1925:83). Park states that the motive behind the press is "to reproduce, as far as possible, in the city the conditions of life in the village" where everyone had personal knowledge of everyone else and a natural interest in one's neighbor could be satisfied. While journalism no longer satisfies this personal interest it does provide information and general human appeal about prominent individuals and dramatic incidents. Park's thesis may be a slight exaggeration. Much news in the newspaper is organized gossip but

journalists also chronicle major political and economic events from their region and the nation. Newspapers contain many other interesting features such as ads, sports, comics, recipes, travel, crossword puzzles, movie reviews, health tips, and stock market. According to Sandman and Associates (1973:146) typical daily newspapers contain:

60% advertising
15% wire service news (state, national, international)
10% syndicated features and columns
10% sports, society, other specialized departments
5% local hard news

During the past 100 years newspapers have become complex systems of information and entertainment. Portions of the newspaper most relevant to the study of social problems are now examined.

The Process of Creating News

Writers of daily newspapers and weekly newsmagazines use conventional formulas to identify events deemed newsworthy, that is, of commercial value. These guidelines are understood by professionals in the news business; reporters on the beat as well as top editors have a clear sense about criteria and procedures for selecting, telling, and interpreting events. These 3 phases of the newsmaking process are briefly examined.

The first phase is the selection of items for print. There are billions of daily occurrences that never reach the newspaper. Journalists become the gatekeepers of events that are reported as news and events that remain unnoticed. They have several unwritten criteria for giving the public what they perceive it wants. Editors and reporters vary in the extent to which they follow these criteria but some selection patterns have been identified.*

Among the qualities of newsworthiness are the unexpected, the unpredictable, the rare, or dramatic that are attention getting, interesting, exciting, amazing, or amusing. In selecting the extraordinary, journalists presume that a routine pattern has been violated somehow by the newsworthy event. An unpredictable and

*The following discussion draws from Bensman and Lilienfeld, Craft and Consciousness, pp. 207-210; Robert E. Park, "News as a Form of Knowledge: A Chapter in the Sociology of Knowledge," American Journal of Sociology" 45 (March, 1940), pp. 669-686; Johan Galtung and Mari Ruge, "Structuring and Selecting News," in The Manufacture of News, eds. Stanley Cohen and Jock Young (Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications, Inc., 1973), pp. 62-72; Paul Rock, "News as Eternal Recurrence," in Cohen and Young, The Manufacture of News, pp. 73-80; Stuart Hall, "A World at One With Itself," in Cohen and Young, The Manufacture of News, pp. 85-94 and "The Determinations of News Photographs," also in Cohen and Young, pp. 176-190; and Graham Murdock, "Political Deviance: The Press Presentation of a Militant Mass Demonstration," in Cohen and Young, The Manufacture of News, pp. 156-175; Jeremy Tunstall, Journalists at Work (London: Constable, 1971).

dramatic disaster such as a major fire in an urban center is more newsworthy than an ordinary home accident. Casual reading of newspapers and weekly magazines identifies unusual events that are a constant source of public entertainment. One illustration will suffice. Newspapers throughout the nation reported the unexpected consequences of a certain broken date. "A 30-year-old accountant, angered by his date cancelling at the last minute, has sued her for $38, saying he won't take being stood up lying down. Tom Horsley said he filed the suit in small claims court against Alyn Chesselet as a matter of principle because she broke an 'oral contract' to have dinner with him and see the musical The Wiz earlier this year" (front page of the Chicago Tribune, 5/25/78).

The novelty aspect of journalism is associated with timeliness. Inherent in the term news is newness or being up to date. As an event loses novelty it no longer merits news coverage even though it may have important and developing ramifications. The bursting of a dam by a flash flood may make the newspapers only at the time of occurrence. Consequences for the lives of the injured may be passed over and the disaster ignored. Likewise, events that continue or develop slowly may be underselected. The long and costly war in Vietnam received little attention until American soldiers were in active combat. During 1980-1981 the coverage of the war between Iraq and Iran was sporadic in American journalism. As journalists seek to follow the public fancy, the coverage of one event is cut short in order to pursue another in accord with the transitory nature of public interest.

Newsworthy items include affairs of people who enjoy high status. Public interest centers on celebrities who have power, prestige, and frequently a lot of money. Celebrities become symbols of the larger world and objects of identification to others with less power and influence: What do people of high status do? What are they really like? The ordinary person becomes a vicarious insider through journalistic accounts of celebrities. Their activities are perceived as having more drama and human interest than even greater activities of non-elites. The first woman to race in the Indianapolis 500 (Janet Guthrie, 1977) enjoyed publicity as she symbolized a new lifestyle for many women. Likewise, blacks who first break the race barrier enjoy instant status. In 1967 Robert Weaver was named by President Johnson as Secretary of HUD and became the first black cabinet officer in United States history. The event became a Time cover story.

The selection of events which become news is effected by structural characteristics of the media. Journalists operate within constraints such as the publication format and frequency. Most journalism products appear daily, weekly, monthly, or bi-monthly. The specific cycle directs the attention of journalists to events which fit the production schedule. With its 24-hour cycle the daily newspaper is adapted to handle quick, short-term events. Gradually developing incidents may be ignored by the daily press until they reach dramatic proportions. Stories that unfold slowly may not warrant news coverage by reporters geared to turning out a daily product. Developing issues are covered occasionally in special analysis sections of the Sunday paper. The

pollution that has developed from repeated environmental abuse remains unnoticed by the press until it reaches crisis proportions. Press coverage tends to identify isolated and dramatic incidents of pollution rather than those caused by mass effects. When the Cuyahoga River caught fire in Cleveland it received considerable news coverage but the continuous use of pollutants by farmers rarely is mentioned.

Journalism does not exist in a power vacuum. Editorial policies, major advertisers, political figures, and special interest groups pressure journalists about the selection of stories. A study regarding media coverage of unsafe automobile design and of the relationship between smoking and cancer by Robert Cirino (1971: 40) details how information about these hazards has been available since 1937 and 1938 but until recently has been omitted or buried on back pages. Since financial support for most media is derived from advertising, a profitable business manager does not offend media interests. Cirino (1971:42) also calls attention to "bias through omission" through examples of news stories which omit important details that would be "inconvenient" for politicians. While journalists have been known to expose illegal affairs of politicians they ordinarily do not embarrasss them about their daily activities. Unless the drinking habits and night life of politicians are extreme they remain off limits for reporters.

When assigned to a story the journalist operates according to 2 principles: find the facts and turn out a good story. The facts must be accepted by the audience and the copy clear and understandable. Reporters must surface the facts quickly and accurately, sometimes in the face of conflicting situations. For instance, when the Chicago Tribune originally reported the murder of 8 student nurses by Richard Speck it stated that "all the bodies were either molested or raped." Autopsies indicated later that only 1 of the nurses might have been raped (Meuth). Events surrounded by controversy magnify difficulties. Following the slaying of black Panthers Clark and Hampton the Chicago Tribune published photographs of the apartment door in which alleged bullet holes had been made by Panthers. On closer inspection the holes were discovered to be made from rusty nails. Journalists must uncover the facts through available resources. While a story should never misrepresent facts the truth is sometimes distorted under pressures such as time or bias.

Journalists are in the business of simplifying complexities so that the average reader can understand reported events. They may omit details of an event and stress its dramatic aspects or present many aspects of a situation and simplify each one. The journalist expects the average reader to read with fleeting attention. The single event orientation of the daily press does not encourage journalists to dig out underlying information or longstanding conditions and causes. Whatever the reasons, the richness and ambiguity of human affairs often are lost; readers may gain the impression that events are more clear-cut than they actually are and that complicated issues have simple causes with simple consequences.

Journalists interpret news for news analysis, editorials, and interpretive articles through their selection and journalistic treatment of events. They typically do not dispute the basic story but rather deal with its controversy. Journalists identify what is important and discuss its meaning from their viewpoint or from the projected viewpoint of the audience.

Newsmen make a distinction between hard news, soft news, and news analysis (Tuchman, 1972:660-670; 1973:110-131). Hard news is presented as fact without conscious interpretation of important and timely events, and include such stories as the passage of a school bond issue, affairs of the state legislature, or a change in crime statistics. Soft news includes feature stories and human interest matters neither urgent nor necessarily important but interesting statements on the human condition. These include stories about the outlook on life of a 104-year-old woman, the problems of having a boa constrictor as a pet, or interesting old houses and the people who live in them. While the slant is soft the presentations are basically factual and often not interpreted consciously. Through news analysis a reporter interprets facts consciously and states their meaning and implications.

News analysis is located on or near the editorial page; located elsewhere in the paper news analysis often appears under a byline. An editor expresses either personal opinion or an official policy of the paper. Columnists analyze the news and voice their conclusions on a regular or semi-regular basis. Magazines such as Time, U.S. News and World Report, and Newsweek regularly feature pages intended for opinion and editorial judgment. During the past 75 years newspeople have become increasingly self conscious about separating the task of telling a story from that of interpreting its meaning. The first task calls for the highest standards of objectivity; the second requires moral sensitivity, sound logic, and a sense of historical trends. These distinctions will be explored in the following discussion on various dimensions of journalistic knowledge.

Dimensions of Journalistic Knowledge: Micro/Macro and Concrete/Abstract

Daily newspapers are kaleidoscopic constructions to inform and entertain a diverse reading audience. Numerous forms of social knowledge crowd into each issue. Using the dual dimensions of micro/macro and concrete/abstract 4 basic types of social knowledge are identified: micro-concrete, micro-abstract, macro-concrete, and macro-abstract. News items located in these 4 categories tend to be similar to those found in common sense discourse although the terminology has been changed to correspond to the language used by journalists.

Micro/Macro. The micro/macro dimension distinguishes between private affairs and public issues. The micro world of private affairs is a constant source of public curiosity. People never tire of learning about weddings, divorces, births, deaths, job promotions, or the social life of celebrities. Space is devoted

to Patty Hearst's first day in jail, Amy Carter's first day at Thadeus Stevens School, Jackie Kennedy Onassis' second wedding, and Gary Gilmore's last day on earth. The macro world of public issues concerns changes in larger social structures which often have impact on millions of people. Newspeople take interest in covering public issues such as election returns, inaugurations, Supreme Court decisions, legislative action, or impeachment hearings. Politicians provide journalistic interest when they commit government resources to social security, Medicare, the G.I. Bill, unemployment compensation, and food stamps, and, on other occasions, make news when they attack welfare.

Concrete/Abstract. Journalistic knowledge expressed in concrete terms is referred to as a story; an abstract assessment of a social issue is labeled analysis (1972:53). Stories emphasize unique and specific events which occur once in a lifetime (e.g., a story about the annexation of a subdivision or the destruction of an old and prominent building in the name of urban renewal). Journalists present articles about general and recurrent features of social life such as an analysis of suburban sprawl and inner city decay. These stories refer to the who, what, and when in the news while analysis deals with the why and the how which often lie behind the stories.

The combined dichotomies (private affairs/public issues and stories/analysis) create 4 types of social knowledge (see Figure 3): stories of private affairs (Gary Gilmore is executed, January 17, 1977); stories of public issues (Supreme Court rules on death penalty, July 2, 1976); analysis of private affairs (psychiatrist reveals theory on the death wish); and analysis of public issues (editorial examines deterrent theory of capital punishment). Sometimes the course of events may create the transformation of a news item from one type of knowledge to another. When Elizabeth Ray first revealed that her bed partner was Representative Wayne Hayes it appeared that another private affair had succumbed to media exploitation. Indeed, Hayes' first public reaction was to dismiss the case as personal trouble: "the poor girl is under psychiatric help." But the private scandal soon became a public issue with Congressional credibility on the line. Stories about the public issue of arbitrary power held by chairpeople of key Congressional committees soon appeared and the issue turned to a general analysis of how power is accumulated and distributed among Congressmen. Editorials on how to reform the system followed. Other journalists shifted their focus from Liz to more basic concerns of sexism in the work structure of American offices.

Popular Magazines

Much of this discussion on journalism has focused on the editorial formula of daily newspapers. While many of these principles hold for other types of popular writing it is worthwhile to call attention to weekly newsmagazines such as Time, Newsweek, U.S. News and World Report, and to Reader's Digest. These magazines are a major source of information and interpretation of current social problems. Virtually all high schools and public libraries in the country subscribe to these publications and millions of

Figure 3

Ways of Knowing: Journalism

DEGREE OF GENERALITY	SCOPE OF AWARENESS: MICRO (private affairs) — Small scale social structures and social settings	SCOPE OF AWARENESS: MACRO (public issues) — Large scale social structures and social settings
CONCRETE (stories) — Descriptive stories of particular people and events at specified times, places. Emphasis on questions of who, what, when, where.	Micro-concrete Stories of private affairs; local news of families, social clubs, churches, human interest stories--"police care stolen."	Macro-concrete Stories of public issues; news of importance in economic and political arenas--Supreme Court decisions, passage of crucial legislation, bill vetoed by President
ABSTRACT (analysis) — Analytical statements exploring general topics which effect many people in different places and times. Emphasis on questions of why, how.	Micro-abstract Analysis of private affairs; discussion of problems of interpersonal relations--affairs of home, office, and community; writings about behavioral science research on human affairs.	Macro-abstract Analysis of public issues editorials, syndicated columns; the commentaries which interprete public issues; includes news analysts such as Walter Lippmann, James Reston, Joseph Kraft, William Buckley, Carl Rowen, George Will.

copies are sold at newsstands or through subscription. Relying on the written words of popular magazines, millions of Americans learn about the latest developments in family living, urban affairs, social welfare, race relations, and numerous other domestic issues. Given the educational power of popular magazines it is appropriate to become familiar with their medium as well as their message.

Newsweeklies such as Time, Newsweek, and U.S. News and World Report are distinguished from Reader's Digest which is a unique twentieth century publishing endeavor. The newsweekly is a weekly account of important news. The pioneer publication in this field is Time. Founded in 1923 by Henry Luce and Britton Hadden the venture was an immediate success. Its editors sought to create a distinctive writing style that would gain the attention of the common man who wanted a quick overview of weekly events. The hallmark of Time is colorful writing. Many household words today--e.g., socialite, tycoon, pundit, oilmen--were invented in the news rooms of Time, Inc. Luce summarized his philosophy in 1939: "What delighted people was to find out that they could read something about this and something about that and something about something else--none of which bored them" (Fox, 1979:29). Time magazine has never claimed to be objective. Anti-Communist and friendly to big business it was staunchly pro-Eisenhower in the 1950s and enthusiastic about the Vietnam war in the 1960s. In the 1970s and 1980s greater effort was made to present a more balanced perspective of liberal and conservative views.

Newsweek was founded in 1933 as a clear imitation of Time. Many of its top editors had been former employees of Time. Newsweek covers many of the same topics as Time and uses a similar format. Both magazines feature a cover story which offers background analysis on a current topic. Although Newsweek claims to be more objective than Time both magazines use loaded words. As A. Kent MacDougal observes, "People quoted in Time don't say things; they snort, snarl, wail, declaim and allow. Newsweek people rue, intone, quip, muse, mutter and huff" (1972:58). Newsweek claims to separate fact from opinion through its policy which uses a byline for stories and reviews. Analysis and opinion pieces are signed by editors and commentators. In its advertising campaigns Newsweek claims credibility for its editorial policy which identifies an author and distinguishes stories from analysis. But the claims do not impress Time executives: "If they did separate fact from opinion, Newsweek would be unreadable" (1972:57).

U.S. News and World Report imitates neither Time nor Newsweek. It makes no effort to cover all interesting or newsworthy events from the previous week. U.S. News and World Report focuses on issues in business, economics, and politics and offers background stories on current events. Statistical information is presented in easily understood charts and diagrams. U.S. News and World Report also devotes space to interviews with key leaders of government and business. While its chief interest continues to be public issues of economic policy, urban affairs, defense strategies, and diplomacy, U.S. News and World Report gives readers advice on

crime prevention, coping with inflation, and "News You Can Use in Your Personal Planning." This newsweekly was founded by David Lawrence, a conservative publisher. The final page of each issue is devoted to an editorial attacking welfare spending, the bloated bureaucracy, or "soft-on-communism" foreign policies.

In the early 1920s a young couple, DeWitt and Lila Wallace offered the public "thirty-one articles each month from leading magazines --each article of enduring value and interest in condensed and compact form" (Reader's Digest, February 1972, cover statement of the first issue). Growing from a meager list of subscribers in 1922 Reader's Digest now claims a monthly circulation of over 30 million copies in 15 languages and a total world-wide readership of 100 million. By the 1970s Reader's Digest editors were reviewing 559 magazines and newspapers, devoting more than 5000 hours monthly to reading (Reader's Digest, February, 1972:157; November, 1972:17). In recent years Reader's Digest has relied less on other sources and published more articles written by its editorial staff. Frequently articles are planted in other magazines and then condensed and "selected" for "reprinting" in Reader's Digest. Today less than one-half of Reader's Digest articles originate as authentic work from other magazine and newspaper sources.

During his long publishing career DeWitt Wallace consciously forged a highly successful editorial policy which reflected his personal values. He was a devout midwestern Presbyterian who believed in the Protestant virtues of small-town America: hard work, clean living, strong courage, and a positive outlook on life despite any odds. Wallace's strong convictions about the free enterprise system and rugged individualism led to the printing of hundreds of articles against the abuses of big government, high taxes, extravagent national debt, and in support of the accomplishments of ordinary people who pull themselves up by their bootstraps. Other elements in the Reader's Digest formula include personal adventure stories, spiritual advice, and patriotic loyalty to the United States. Critics have sometimes suggested that the perfect Reader's Digest article would be entitled, "How I Fought a Grizzly Bear for the FBI and Found God Wrapped in the American Flag."

Magazines such as Time, Newsweek, U.S. News and World Report and Reader's Digest are major success stories of the print media. They cultivate and promote writing styles which translate complex and frustrating twentieth century problems into easily understood prose. Their editorial staffs would concur with Thomas Griffith of Time that "The journalist's job is to make the important interesting" (Time, June 12, 1978:102). Their appetite for interests which can be made interesting is endless and covers a wide range of topics in American society and culture. They offer Americans and millions of international readers a weekly profile of the multi-faceted dimensions of our civilization. These magazines are a peculiar distillation of American culture. Editors of popular magazines have manufactured distinctive perspectives on such social problems as crime, urban affairs, and changing sex roles. This attempt to cover virtually all topics of interest in American society provides a rich sample of reporting and opinion on the 7 social issues discussed in this essay.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIOLOGY

Sociology and the Scientific Method

Sociology is the third side in our triangle of social knowledge. It is grounded in 2 distinct yet related traditions: (1) humanistic scholarship cultivated by philosophers, historians, and novelists, (2) the basic principles of scientific inquiry which hold for both the natural and social sciences. Bred and nurtured in the academy sociology is sustained primarily by the research efforts of professors and their graduate students. While most sociological knowledge is created, criticized, and shared by academic sociologists within the provincial world of higher education there are exceptions. A small but significant group of research sociologists is employed by government agencies and private corporations. A few sociologists enjoy professional recognition beyond the boundaries of academia. As writers they contribute to magazines and books read by the general public.

Sociologists have a longstanding interest in studying social problems according to the canons of scientific inquiry. Sociology also has a rich heritage of humanistic scholarship. Certain sociologists contend that the humanistic and scientific positions are irreconcilable. But why reject either? Sociological studies draw from both traditions (e.g., W. I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, The Polish Peasant in Europe and America; Robert and Helen Lynd, Middletown; Herbert Gans, The Urban Villagers) and benefit from humanistic insights as well as scientific rigor. Both traditions contribute to the understanding of social problems.

The humanistic tradition is guided by an intimate familiarity with human behavior. In their classic study of Polish immigrants W. I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki gained an awareness of the problems of immigration by studying 754 letters written by 50 families and from newspaper clippings, church records, police files, field notes and unpublished autobiographies. This detailed account (The Polish Peasant in Europe and America) provides a rich and vivid portrayal of the hardships confronting immigrants who left familiar villages in Europe for the strange and frightening opportunities of the New World. Other humanistically-oriented researchers acquire a sense for human behavior through intensive observations of people and events in real life situations. As participant observers these sociologists gain first hand impressions of mental hospitals (Goffman, Asylums), prisons (Jacobs, Stateville), inner city neighborhoods (Suttles, The Social Order of the Slum, and Gans, The Urban Villagers) or public housing projects (Rainwater, Behind Ghetto Walls). Such studies illuminate the social existence of people from all walks of life. That such classic studies are humanistically oriented does not deny their scientific value.

Sociology textbooks often make a claim that sociology is scientific. This claim is evaluated best through discussion of various social problems. The principles of scientific inquiry are ideals which state ways in which science ought to be conducted. Sociologists strive to conduct their work in the scientific spirit of empirical scrutiny, objectivity, and logical consistency. These

3 elements provide broad prescriptions about how sociologists study various social problems. They approach a social problem such as social inequality by attempting to understand it in the real world. They are not satisfied with the vague idea that some people are better off than others. As professionals interested in empirical evidence sociologists determine reliable ways to observe and measure different types of social inequality. They might ask a sample of people to indicate the varying degrees of prestige attached to different occupations. Or they might ask residents of a town to rank the social standing of their neighbors. On other occasions sociologists measure social inequality by the sole criterion of family income. Whatever the method of observation and measurement the task of the sociologist remains to develop reliable techniques which record and measure some aspect of the social world.

Various methods of observing social actions and attitudes are designed to provide similar observations by any qualified observer. An interview schedule which identifies the most prestigious people in town should locate the same list of elites regardless of the particular sociologist giving the interview. When other observers use the same techniques they should find similar results. Objectivity emphasizes consistency among sociologists who observe the same social activities. While sociologists never live up to the perfect canons of objectivity they attempt to minimize personal bias. The likelihood of objectivity increases through scrutiny of the various sociological methods and results.

Procedures of inquiry and conclusions drawn from observations must be systematically logical. Inconsistencies sometimes noted in common sense thinking are unacceptable. The logical coherence of sociological theories is under constant scrutiny. Karl Marx once asserted that economic factors determine other forms of social inequality; hence power, prestige, and wealth become a single indicator of social inequality. Marx's theory of social class was examined carefully by Max Weber who argued that power, prestige, and wealth fluctuate with some degree of independence. Not all wealthy people enjoy high prestige and power (e.g., underworld gangsters who live in seclusion) and not all powerful people are wealthy (e.g., labor leaders). Theories of social inequality must strive for logical consistency. Marx's theory of social class seems to break down in the complex and pluralistic societies of North America and Europe.

Jack Douglas has summarized the elements essential for scientific thinking in sociology (1970:23):

> These aspects seem to be (1) a commitment to discovering truths about the world as experienced by human beings, (2) a commitment to grounding or testing any ideas proposed as truths in empirical observations of some kind <u>at some stage</u>, and (3) a commitment to accepting such tests as valid only when at some stage they can be made (publicly) shareable, that is, objective.

These scientific guidelines provide a common framework for sociologists who study social problems that range from shoplifting to the mounting pressures of overpopulation.

The Process of Creating Sociological Knowledge

All forms of social knowledge are the products of social process. Common sense knowledge is created and sustained by a network of informal conversations and observations. Ideas are shared in a common culture from a heritage of several centuries. The knowledge of journalism is created consciously by reporters, editors, and publishers who search for newsworthy events that will interest readers. Sociological knowledge is created out of a different kind of social network. It is the product of several thousand professors and their graduate students who engage in various research endeavors. Resources essential to carry out such research are derived from various sources: universities and colleges, federal government agencies, private foundations, and the personal bank accounts of the researchers. Some projects cost millions of dollars while others are shoestring operations. Robert Bailey studied community organizers on Chicago's west side and writes of his entrepreneurship: "When foundations and the government did not consider the project worthy of support, my parents did. A personal loan from them made it possible to pay the interviewers" (1974:ix).

Acquiring financial support to pursue research is at the heart of research in any discipline. The issue selected for study and its funding are closely related. In 1896 a wealthy Philadelphian, Susan P. Wharton, wanted to learn about the problems Negroes faced in Philadelphia. Consequently she sponsored the research of a young black sociologist, W. E. B. DuBois, who wrote a classic in American sociology (The Philadelphia Negro). DuBois was unable to secure subsequent financial support to study the social conditions of American Negroes. His ambitious research program at Atlanta University (1897-1914) never received the attention it deserved. Other scholars of race relations faced limited research funds at the turn of the century.

Thomas Pettigrew notes the difficulty of obtaining research grants to study race relations in the 1950s. The racial crisis triggered by the 1954 Supreme Court decision on school desegregation stirred up southern politicians determined to choke off government money earmarked for the study of desegregation. These examples from the field of race relations illustrate research limits sociologists face regarding topics other people refuse to finance. Since few sociologists are independently wealthy they must negotiate with potential patrons about research topics worthy of support.

This brief discussion on the mundane issue of money raises this question: How do sociologists decide which problem to study? The central thesis is simple. Academic sociologists select social issues to study according to criteria established outside academic circles. In other words people from many stations of life--taxpayers, politicians, ministers, labor leaders, bureaucrats, businessmen--define and redefine the social issues most pressing in contemporary society. These broader definitions of social problems establish a research agenda. An example from the past clarifies this point.

During World War II Hollywood writers prepared new scripts for John Wayne, Victor Mature, and Humphrey Bogart. These actor-soldiers gladly served their country on the studio lots of sunny California. Likewise, sociologists quickly shifted their research agenda to the war effort. Leading sociologists of the day produced a series of valuable studies which dealt with such topics as the social life of American soldiers (Stouffer, et al.), facist attitudes (Adorno, et al.), the fighting morale of German soldiers (Shils and Janowitz), and campaigns to sell war bonds (Merton). Sociologists conducted timely research in a time of crisis.

Just as Hollywood does not create a war to obtain new scripts sociologists do not determine which social problems deserve urgent attention. Some topics of research are bound to historical circumstance (e.g., immigration from the 1880s to 1920s, World War II, right-wing extremism in the 1950s, student unrest in the late 1960s); other topics are relevant for all seasons (crime, social inequality, bureaucracy, social alienation); finally, certain topics are of persistent interest but the specific issues change with the historical circumstances (e.g., race relations, changing sex roles, urban affairs). Sometimes sociologists plug along on topics which generate little interest such as the dozens of studies they have conducted on leadership patterns in small groups. On other occasions their research follows popular trends set by journalists and politicians. When Michael Harrington published The Other America (1963) and President Johnson declared "war on poverty" many research grants were written. Under government directives from President Reagan the prospects of federal support for sociological studies have been sharply diminished.

The deceptively simple act of selecting a research topic becomes complex. Sociologists do not generate research interests in a vacuum. Like ordinary people and newspaper editors they recognize that social problems are created by a host of social forces.

Once sociologists select a research area (e.g., crime) and limit their topic to manageable proportions (e.g., studying an aspect of crime such as delinquent gangs, white collar crime, or prison conditions) they must choose the methods of observation. Sociologists explore ideas through empirical investigation but the most appropriate methods of investigation vary with the research. Sociologists must weigh the advantages and disadvantages of each approach for their particular research. Three common methods deserve mention: survey research, participant observation, and analysis of census data and other government statistics.

Survey Research. The most common research method in sociology is a survey. This technique uses either mailed questionnaires or carefully structured interviews and includes at least 7 distinct stages: (1) articulate the problem in order to identify key variables, (2) construct the questionnaire or interview schedule that incorporates the research concerns, (3) determine the population sample, (4) mail the questionnaires or conduct the interviews, (5) code the questionnaires or interview schedules, (6) tabulate the results with electronic computers, (7) interpret the computed results and write a final report. Many refinements

and subtle skills are associated with each of the 7 stages. For example sociologists construct questions which minimize a bias effect on respondents rather than those which contain loaded opinions. Statements which include such phrases as "the right wing tendencies of the Republican Party" or "the socialistic tendencies of the Democratic Party" should be avoided.

Survey analysts have explored numerous social problems. Some of these studies are recognized as classics of empirical scholarship: The Voter's Choice (Lazersfeld), The American Soldier (Stouffer, et al.), Christian Beliefs and Anti-Semitism (Glock and Stark), Communism, Conformity, and Civil Liberties (Stouffer), Protest and Prejudice (Gary Marx), Social Class and Mental Illness (Hollingshead), and Equality of Educational Opportunity (Coleman). Sociologists claim to know about the attitudes, beliefs, and opinions of Americans. Much of this knowledge rests on the findings of countless surveys.

Participant Observation. This research technique provides the sociologist with the opportunity to observe and participate simultaneously. The sociologist spends time with members of the group being studied and observes daily routines and unusual events as a part of the action and at the same time removed from it. It is a difficult research role to master and the number of capable investigators is relatively small. Sociologists have observed numerous groups and social situations; their books and articles provide an awareness of intimate social worlds such as mental hospitals (Goffman), inner city slums (Suttles), working class taverns (LeMasters), universities (Becker, et al.), assembly lines (Roy), small towns (Vidich and Bensman), urban ethnic communities (Gans), and prisons (Sykes, Jacobs).

Census Data and Other Vital Statistics. Since 1790 the United States government has surveyed the total population each decade. During the past 40 years the Bureau of Census and other government agencies such as the Department of Labor and HEW have conducted hundreds of surveys. These data are collected and compiled in numerous government documents. The highlights of this descriptive information are found in such publications as the U.S. Fact Book. The raw data collected by the Bureau of Census are available to research scholars on IBM cards or computer tapes. Sociologists use this material to analyze further such large scale issues as human migration, the economic advancement of blacks, changing housing patterns in metropolitan areas, and the growing proportion of women entering the labor force. These data help sociologists understand broad societal changes. For example, the black population, previously concentrated in the rural South, has dispersed to metropolitan areas throughout the United States. City planners, educators, religious leaders, and welfare executives often call on sociologists to interpret changing social conditions as revealed in census data.

The list of empirical methods used by sociologists is not exhausted by survey research, participant observation, and census data analysis. A variety of other techniques assists in the gathering of relevant data. Historical resources for research such as Kai Erikson's study of witch trials in Massachusetts

(Wayward Puritans) are found in archives. Edwin Sutherland studied corporation reports and court records in his classic study, White Collar Crime. Sutherland also pioneered a study when he hired an anonymous criminal to write an autobiography, The Professional Thief. Investigations are conducted occasionally in quasi-experimental fashion. Richard Schwartz and Jerome Skolnick posed an experimenter as an employment agent with 4 hypothetical job seekers. They found that even when a person is acquitted of a crime there still is reluctancy to hire that person. Our legal system asserts that a man is innocent until proven guilty but in the real world of job seeking the innocent often are treated as if guilty.

Knowledge has meaning only when it is shared. Sociologists do not select problems and conduct research solely for their curiosity. They are paid to produce knowledge for others as well. Sometimes sociologists concentrate their attention on highly specialized work intended primarily for other sociologists. Often these research results are presented initially as learned papers at professional meetings (e.g., the annual convention of the American Sociological Association). The papers then are revised for academic journals (e.g., The American Sociological Review) or scholarly publishing houses (e.g., the University of Chicago Press). In other instances sociological research is reported initially in official reports commissioned by government agencies or private foundations (e.g., The American Dilemna by Gunnar Myrdal; The Negro Family: The Case for National Action by Daniel Moynihan; Equality of Educational Opportunity by James Coleman). These works are recognized by the larger audience of social scientists, journalists, and public officials. Sociologists often spend years assessing various findings and themes. Another important avenue of sociological work is the monograph which integrates many research findings and theories into a new synthesis of knowledge on a given social problem. For example, in the field of race relations the relevant scholarly literature on prejudice was synthesized by 2 social psychologists, Gordon Allport, The Nature of Prejudice (1954) and Howard Ehrlich, The Social Psychology of Prejudice (1973).

Sociologists also share their knowledge of social problems through textbooks, popular books, technical reports for various agencies, and timely articles in popular and semi-popular magazines. They offer testimony to Congressional committees and travel public speaking circuits as acknowledged experts on various issues. And finally, sociologists share their wisdom in college classrooms with students who hopefully are enthusiastic about statistical data and sociological theories.

The Sociological Perspective

The study of sociology makes it possible to have a certain perspective on human relationships. It offers a vantage point from which certain things are seen more clearly than others. Some features become "figures" which stand out clearly while others become "ground," the background against which the "figures" are highlighted. While standing at the front and looking toward the back of a classroom students taking notes are highlighted while

standing at the back and looking forward highlights the teacher and chalkboard. Sociologists tend to highlight certain aspects of human behavior and give minimal attention to others. The sociological perspective focuses on patterned relations between people engaged in human activity. The uniqueness of the individual fades into "ground" while the bonds between people (relationships) become the "figures." People are related through economic, political, and religious activities, through schools and families, and by social contacts. The sociologist is interested in all interactions.

Sociologists study relational patterns between groups of people. They compare typical relations such as those among American mothers, fathers, and children to different patterns like those found in an Israeli kibbutz or among the Hopi Indians. Sociologists are interested in family patterns across social class and how these patterns relate to economic and political behavior. Organizations such as clubs, churches, corporations, and college sororities, are studied as well as behavior within a political party or between political parties. Sociologists search for patterns of interaction wherever they are found. The interaction may be a fluid process like the interaction between two friends or may be crystallized like the political structure of a society.

But what about the individual in a study of patterned and recurrent relationships? Characteristics that have general social meaning and locate the individual in relation to others are in the foreground while the unique features of an individual fade into the background. For example, the sex of an individual locates that individual in the social world also. Males and females are expected to behave in certain ways regardless of their unique personalities. Mothers are expected to share certain behavioral patterns and fathers certain others. College professors, newspaper editors, plumbers, and morticians engage in their occupations in individual ways yet each occupation has come to have a set of general expectations about the behavior of its members.

Male, female, mother, father, college professor, and plumber are titles which locate specific relationships to other people. To the sociologist these titles denote status, a social position relative to others. Each status has associated with it a cluster of roles, a set of expectations for the behavior of the person occupying the social position. The word mother represents both a status (a position relative to her children) and a role (a general set of expectations about her behavior). Sociologists are interested in the relational aspects of an individual such as rural or urban residence, religious affiliation, club memberships, education, age, or race. These characteristics have social meaning and affect behavior, beliefs, or attitudes. Social attributes of an individual are part of the sociologist's "figure" even though the individual's unique attributes become part of the "ground." Sociologists do not ignore the "ground" nor deny its importance even though it is not the focus of their perspective.

The sociologist looks to social structure (social patterns that appear as figures in the sociological perspective) to explain social issues. The patterns may be characteristic of a group as a whole such as the value system of a society or arrangements of parts of a group such as the percent unemployed. Social patterns are ongoing interactions such as husband-wife-child relationships among families of low social and economic standing or static patterns of human relations such as those of authority and decision making found in a bureaucracy. The term "structure" means "organization" or arrangement of "parts" and the sociologist understands social issues in the context of social organization (Merton, 1968:104).

Crime appears to the sociologist as part of the organization of industrial society and is explained as one of the consequences of patterned inequality. Poverty derives from inequality of opportunity rather than any innate defects of poor people. Many contemporary social problems (e.g., race relations, central city slums, or environmental pollution) have their roots in various changing social structures. The issue of changing sex roles is an example of an attempt to change a social structure perceived to have restrained certain people for many years. Sociologists do not believe that social issues originate from the innate qualities of individuals. The reality of social issues is constructed with primary concern for the social structures in which all human behavior occurs.

Multiple Realities of Sociology

Sociology is both theoretical and empirical. It develops abstract explanatory generalizations based on factual evidence. While both should be present in any work the balance between theory and empirical evidence differs among sociological writings. Some sociologists such as Talcott Parsons, Jurgen Habermas, and Claude Levi-Strauss stress theoretical analysis. Data which tests the validity of their ideas have not been collected systematically. For example, Parsons has constructed an elaborate theory of social classes but has not developed specific research on people who live in the upper, middle, and lower classes. Other sociologists such as North and Hatt and Rossi and Hodges have collected detailed information on the prestige ratings of different occupations in the United States. These works are recognized as sophisticated empirical research but remain essentially descriptive in nature and devoid of central theoretical concerns. Most sociologists avoid the extremes of "armchair theorizing" and "dustbowl empiricizing" by adopting theories of the middle-range (Robert Merton). "Middle-range theory involves abstractions, of course, but they are close enough to observed data to be incorporated in propositions that permit empirical testing" (Merton, 1968:39). An excellent example of middle-range theorizing is the work of Cloward and Ohlin, Delinquency and Opportunity: A Theory of Delinquent Gangs. After reviewing numerous descriptive accounts of gangs Cloward and Ohlin formulated a theory about delinquent subcultures. They contend that these subcultures are an attempt by lower class boys to cope with the inconsistency between the acceptance of conventional goals of success and the experience

of limited opportunities for success. The frustration created by this inconsistency leads to various gang activities. Several sociologists have attempted to test empirically the adequacy of this theory. Merton's formulation of the middle range still remains an ideal not always attainable. Sociology continues to be written with various degrees of abstraction 3 decades after Merton offered his classic reconciliatory formula. While some sociological works are located in the middle many other studies continue to fall on either side as theoretical or empirical.

While there is no clear division between theoretical and empirical analysis each tends to construct a somewhat different reality. The diversity of the sociological world of knowledge is illustrated in this essay through examples of both theoretical and empirical analysis.

Sociologists have skills analagous to modern camera crews. They zoom in on small details of face to face encounters and with equal mastery adjust their lens to capture the broad panorama of entire societies. Patterns of social relationships that are studied range from interpersonal interaction to a societal structure. At the micro end of the range are studies of interaction between friends, among family members, and among cliques in organizations. A sociologist might study the informal relations between prisoners and their guards or among members of an innercity gang. At the macro end are studies of whole societies or broad structures within them such as the stratification system or political institutions; other examples include studies of the relative economic position of men and women in the United States or the assimilation of ethnic groups into American society.

The range in size of social units studied by sociologists is extreme yet there is no precise line dividing micro and macro studies. Sociological research is concerned also with social organizations that are of intermediate size. Sociologists study communities that range from small villages to large cities, churches that have fewer than 100 or more than 3000 members, and bureaucracies of any size. The list of mid-size organizations studied by sociologists is endless: schools, school districts, universities, prisons, prison systems, systems of higher education, hospitals, libraries, professions, insane asylums, political parties, voluntary groups, factories. Size is sometimes the key variable used to explain dissimilar internal arrangements of organizations varying in size (Kasards, 1974:19-28). Sociologists also study small groups which coexist within larger organizations such as factories (Roy, 1959), bureaucracies (Blau, 1955), and armies (Shils and Janowitz, 1948). While micro and macro analysis helps us recognize certain extremes in sociological studies the question of size is more than a matter of small and large.

The distinction between micro and macro studies can be juxtaposed with the distinction between theoretical and empirical. Sociological studies have various combinations of abstraction and scale. Sociologists conduct macro theoretical studies (e.g., Duncan's eco-system of the human environment); micro theoretical

studies (e.g., Cohen's theory of delinquent boys); macro empirical studies (e.g., Farley's study of the social and economic gains of blacks); and micro empirical studies (e.g., Thrasher's classic study of 1,313 Chicago gangs). Micro/macro and theoretical/empirical are dimensions of the multiple realities within sociology. They are extreme tendencies and not definitive categories of all sociological studies. Figure 4 outlines some of the general features of academic sociology.

Another dimension, number of units in the sample, points out the diversity of sociological studies. A sociologist might study 1 marriage, 10 marriages, 5000, or all the marriages in the United States. The particular number studied often determines different results. Likewise, a sociologist might study class structure in the United States, all industrialized nations, or all known societies for which scholars have data. The number of units analyzed varies from narrow (few units) to broad (many units) whether or not the study tends to be micro or macro, theoretical or empirical.

The most narrow scope occurs when sociologists focus empirical and theoretical efforts on a single unit referred to as a case study. Gouldner's analysis of a gypsum plant and Liebow's interest in one street corner are examples of case studies. Among the more famous case studies in American sociology are the investigations of a single community: Middletown, Yankee City, Elmtown, Jonesville, Plainsville, New Haven (Who Governs), and Atlanta (Community Power Structure). These studies enrich our understanding of communities and other aspects of social life but cause critics to question their typical representation. While case studies illustrate a narrow scope the broad scope is represented by the work of demographers (population analysts) who often use census data to enumerate each case in the entire population. Demographers draw on millions of cases to discuss such problems as migration from rural to urban areas or the growing number of women in the labor market.

Unit size and sample size are independent of each other. An international survey concerning premarital sexual affairs may include several thousand cases but the unit of analysis--paired relationships--is exceedingly small in scale. Weber's monumental culture case studies of world religions and economic structure are macroscopic in scale but narrow in scope due to the small number of great religions.

Daniel Yankelovich and Kenneth Keniston share interest in the changing attitudes and beliefs of young people. Although these issues are predominantly micro in scale Yankelovich interviewed thousands of young people (The New Morality) and Keniston studied 12 young people in depth (Young Radicals). The independence of these 2 dimensions of sociological analysis is illustrated further by another example. In recent years several sociologists have become interested in communes: Benjamin Zablocki conducted a case study of a single commune, the Bruderhof (Joyful Community); Rosabeth Moss Kanter studied several dozen contemporary communes as well as 30 communes established in the United States during 1780-1860 (Commitment and Community). While the scale of analysis for both works is micro one scope is narrow and the other broad.

Figure 4

Ways of Knowing: Sociology

DEGREE OF GENERALITY	SCOPE OF AWARENESS: MICRO	SCOPE OF AWARENESS: MACRO
CONCRETE (empirical emphasis) Descriptive studies focus on specific time periods, places, and groups. While unique features of groups are not emphasized, they are acknowledged as important	Small-scale social structures and social settings Micro-concrete Empirical accounts of the interpersonal relationships of home, neighborhood, work, school, church, prison.	Large-scale social structures and social settings Macro-concrete Empirical accounts of large scale social structures such as political, economic, and military institutions; attention is often given to significant changes and social trends.
ABSTRACT (theoretical emphasis) Theoretical statements which emphasis universal claims; explanations of social processes and social structures extend to all time, all places, and all groups	Micro-abstract Theoretical statements of interpersonal relationships and personal adjustments--marriage, sex roles, age cycle, socialization.	Macro-abstract Theoretical statements about societal structures such as contending interest groups, power conflicts, social classes, ideological systems.

COMPARING AND CONTRASTING PERSPECTIVES

The 3 types of social knowledge considered in this essay have been identified along with each set of distinctive features. Common sense is symbolic of the world of conventional wisdom and available as a free commodity to people who engage in ordinary conversation and observation. Journalism is commercial knowledge available to citizens at cost. In many western societies journalism is supported primarily by commercial advertisers. Newspapers and magazines are justified ultimately by public purchase of editorial selections. Sociology is neither free nor commercially viable. This knowledge system is nurtured primarily in universities and colleges where sociology professors engage in various research activities. Government agencies and private foundations often provide funds to faculty members who express interest in studying various social problems. Sociological knowledge is shared among professionals in specialized journals and research monographs. A watered down version of their key ideas is packaged in textbooks.

The principle features of common sense, journalism, and sociology have been outlined. Attention is directed now to similarities and differences among the 3 ways of knowing the often dull and sometimes dazzling social existence of homo sapiens.

Common Sense and Journalism

Most news found in daily papers and weekly magazines contains common sense items. After all, newspapers are the literature of the masses. Nevertheless many events which generate common sense reflection are never reported in newspapers. For example, thousands of personal items are stolen weekly in major cities; likewise, blue and white collar workers weekly rob their companies of millions of dollars of material. Newspapers rarely mention such widespread thievery. Worker boredom helps to create thousands of inferior products daily while plant managers and quality control experts pull their hair in desperation. But editors never find such information newsworthy. Journalists control the selection of human activities that will be read as news in the next edition.

Some daily occurrences become elevated to the status of news. Journalists cultivate a keen sense for public interests and tastes. The writers and readers of news share common assumptions about such values as property rights, moral behavior, fair play, and social advancement. Newspeople keep pace with newly accepted definitions of private and public conduct. In the 1920s blacks faced discrimination in virtually all areas of social and economic life. Their downtrodden status was taken for granted by most whites. Selective reporting by established newspapers treated blacks as though they were invisible. New visibility for blacks was brought about by the civil rights movement during the 1960s. Favorable public opinion toward racial integration preceded the visibility of blacks in the daily press. A further example illustrates the close relationship between common sense views and journalistic interests. The bombing of Pearl Harbor created a

common sense patriotism for writers and readers alike; the war became the concern of everyone. The criteria of selection are related by journalists to shifting trends of conventional thought.

Conventional wisdom and the press are interrelated but the common sense views of various groups are not represented equally in newspapers. Journalism is big business and publishers represent the upper echelons of power and wealth in America. Newspapers are subsidized by many commercial interests which purchase advertising space. It is not surprising that publishers see cents in the views of businessmen and other persons of economic power and wealth. We share Molotch's contention that "media represent the powerful talking to the less powerful." Furthermore, "the primary news need of those who control mass media is to perpetuate the general status quo of the United States' social and economic structure" (Harvey Molotch, 1978; see also Molotch & Lester, 1975; Cirino, 1971; Jock Young, 1973. Publishers have not formed a conspiracy to manipulate news in the interest of big business. The generation of news is linked to power and wealth in many indirect ways. For example, politicians, universities, labor unions, corporations, and government agencies have accessibility to news sources through highly sophisticated public relations staffs. Public relations personnel write many news stories which protect the self interests of their clients. Common sense views, which prevail in various centers of power, filtrate the daily news.

Common Sense and Sociology

Sociologists have a peculiar love/hate relationship to common sense. On one hand sociologists claim to be scientists who do not use the language of common sense; on the other hand sociologists borrow key terms from the lexicon of daily life in order to study social problems. A topic such as social inequality that requires extensive research and scholarly writing relies on ordinary words such as income, housing, poverty, and unemployment. This ambiguity attracts the attention of many prominent sociologists who attempt to explain the creation of scientific terms from the raw materials of common sense experiences.

In 1895 Emile Durkheim proclaimed that the new science of sociology should dismiss the language of laymen and the popular ideas of public debate. Durkheim (1897:37) urges sociologists "to formulate entirely new concepts, appropriate to the requirements of science and expressed in an appropriate terminology" but admits to the impossibility of rejecting common sense language. "In actual practice one always starts with the lay concept and the lay term." Alfred Schutz argues that common sense experience always leads to first order constructs, e.g., father, rich, criminal, neighborhood. Sociologists erect their special terminology on the common foundation of everyday language. "The concepts formed by the social scientists are constructs of the constructs formed in common sense thinking" (Schutz, 1970:275). The second order concepts of sociology supercede the first order concepts of common sense experience. As scientific terms the sociological concepts must be in accordance with the procedural rules of a testable hypothesis and empirical inquiry.

When sociologists translate questionnaire answers into data they make common sense assumptions about the meaning of the question and the answer. Although these assumptions are tested the tests themselves rest on assumptions that sociologists and their respondents share both the language to communicate and the experiences which give background meaning to the words. For example, both sociologists and respondents know that the word mother calls forth a typical mental image. Sociologists often use information that includes arrest records, suicide rates, and census reports collected and processed by others. These data have built into them the common sense experiences of the people who collect the data. Law enforcement officials tend to label as suicides those cases in which suicide makes sense to them and label the other cases accidents (Douglas, 1970:111-130). Ethnomethodology, a subfield of sociology, is the study of how sociologists inadvertently use common sense as they study the common sense world.

As sociologists approach American social problems they are indebted to their common sense culture. Diverse roles such as citizen, spouse, parent, employee, or friend, equip sociologists with the first order concepts needed to understand such problems as changing sex roles, race relations, and crime. Black sociologists such as W. E. B. DuBois, E. Franklin Frazier, Kenneth Clark, and Joyce Ladner draw on a rich agenda of private and public experiences to formulate new insights about race and racism in white America. Likewise, several female sociologists have shaped common sense awareness into disciplined inquiry as they force male colleagues and others to re-examine the pervasive nature of sexism (e.g., Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Mirra Komarovsky, Jesse Bernard, Alice Rossi, and Joan Huber). Sociologists succeed with varying degrees of detachment as they attempt to step outside their common sense world but never completely escape the imprints of family, friends, and fellow citizens.

Journalism and Sociology

During the twentieth century newspapers and weekly magazines have evolved into highly diverse information systems. In this same time period sociologists have fragmented their discipline into diverse research methods and new areas of inquiry. Given the plural character of sociology and journalism sociologists and journalists have much in common. A small group of sociologists and journalists has earned the respect of members from both professional guilds. Occasionally sociologists have expressed their views on social problems in magazines and newspapers with the eloquence and passion of a muckraking editor. This style of the sociological imagination is illustrated in the study of crime. Alfred Lindesmith's magazine articles on oppressive drug laws are an impressive record of active engagement in a public controversy. Similarly, certain journalists (William Whyte, Organization Man, Charles Silberman, Crisis in Black and White, Anthony Lewis, Gideon's Trumpet, and Thomas Plate, Crime Pays) are astute social analysts. A few mavericks such as Max Lerner, Andrew Greeley, and Nathan Glazer have devoted themselves to dual careers in academia and journalism. While these writers are neither typical sociologists nor journalists they point out occasions when sociology and journalism share common concerns and audiences.

Jeremy Tunstall suggests that "there is more in common between sociologists and journalists than either side might care to admit. Both occupations are interested in the seamy side of life; both occupational ideologies stress that reality is shielded by facades, things that are not what they seem, and that many social appearances have been deliberately contrived. Both sociologists and journalists often anticipate deceit, self-seeking and corruption in public life" (Tunstall, 1971:277). In short both sociologists and journalists are intrigued by the multifaceted character of modern social problems.

Journalism and sociology often share the same interests, writers, and audiences but their common bonds should not obscure fundamental differences. After working many years as a reporter Ruth Jacobs contrasts her entry in the field of sociology: "Unlike journalism, sociology is not confined to reporting and interpretation. Public interest and novelty justify journalism, but sound theory justifies sociology" (Jacobs, 19:350). Journalists often approach the topic of race by reporting and interpreting landmark Supreme Court decisions (e.g., famous cases regarding school desegregation, busing and affirmative action); sociologists by contrast write about the race relations issue in broader terms of conflict and assimilation.

Journalism and sociology share concerns regarding the use of observation strategies. Sociology relies on such data sources as participant observation, survey methods, and government statistics. These 3 approaches to social knowledge are used in modified form by journalists. As participants of various social groups reporters study and record real life situations. A dramatic example of participant observation is Tom Wicker's account of his 4 harrowing days as a mediator in the Attica Prison riot (A Time to Die, 1975). Sociologists Gresham Sykes (The Society of Captives, 1958) and James Jacobs (Statesville, 1978) conducted similar participant observation studies within the walls of maximum security penitentiaries but their resulting books are less dramatic and more theoretical. Likewise, survey methods are used by a thriving polling industry which regularly sells its empirical results to newspapers and magazines (see Michael Wheeler, 1976). The opinion polls of George Gallup, Louis Harris, and Daniel Yankelovich offer editors a continuous news source on topics ranging from foreign policy to smoking pot. During presidential elections computer analysts and pollsters apply many sophisticated survey techniques developed initially by Samuel Stouffer and Paul Lazarsfeld, 2 distinguished empirical sociologists of the twentieth century. And finally, journalists have great interest in government statistics. Like sociologists they turn to the Uniform Crime Reports of the FBI to gain an understanding of changing crime patterns. Occasionally journalists such as Ben Wattenberg assess massive files of government data to portray a broader picture of the changing social structures of the United States (1976).

Some academic sociologists enjoy the notion that their discipline ranks above the daily news grind of journalists. In some circles well written and popular sociological writing is put down as mere

journalism. But constructing different ways to understand social reality does not necessarily demonstrate the superiority of any method over another. We share the views of Max Weber who had extensive knowledge of the press (1946:80).

> Not everybody realizes that a really good journalistic accomplishment requires at least as much "genius" as any scholarly accomplishment, especially because of the necessity of producing at once and "on order," and because of the necessity of being effective, to be sure, under quite different conditions of production. It is almost never acknowledged that the responsibility of the journalist is far greater, and that the sense of responsibility of every honorable journalist is, on the average, not a bit lower than that of the scholar, but rather, higher. This is because, in the very nature of the case, irresponsible journalistic accomplishments and their often terrible effects are remembered.

CONCLUSION

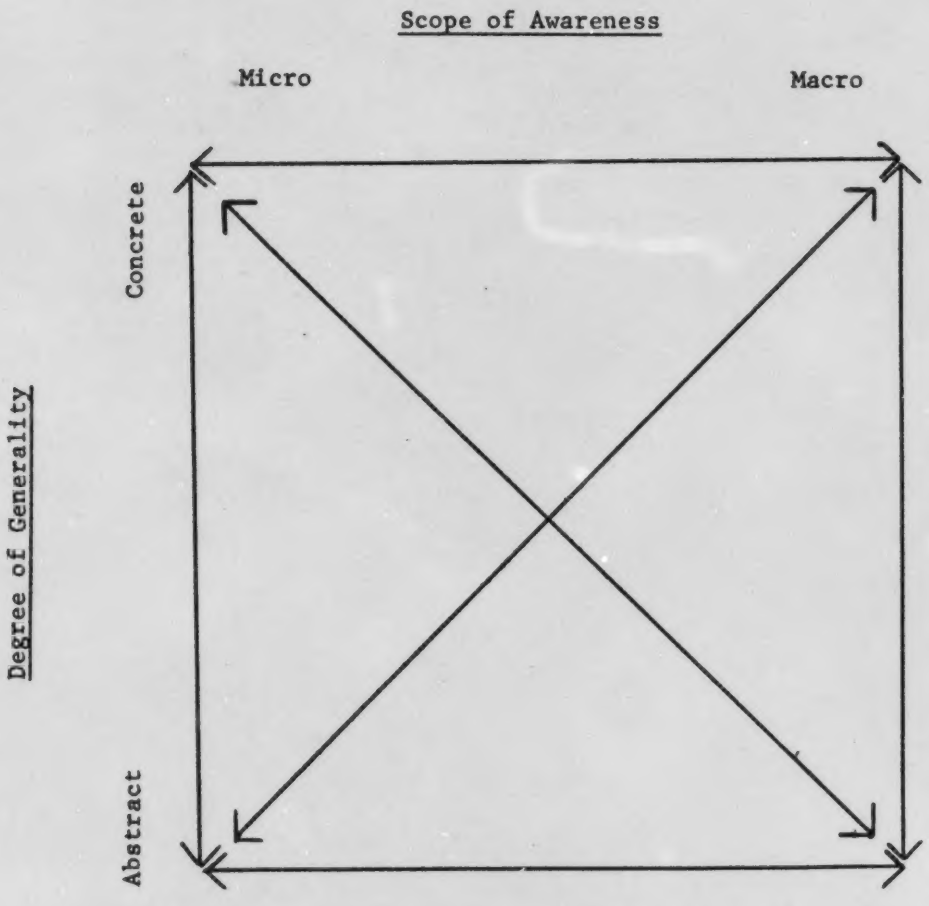
Sociologists, journalists, and ordinary citizens engage in diverse assessments of social issues. The meaning of social problems often defies simple understanding but there is a tendency in all 3 perspectives to perceive social problems along 2 dimensions: microscopic/macroscopic and concrete/abstract. However, certain dimensions of 1 perspective are not identical with those of the other perspectives. For example, the micro-concrete category for journalism is not the same as the micro-concrete category for sociology. The descriptive studies by sociologists are never as concrete as the detailed stories found in newspapers. Each knowledge system articulates its own peculiar tendencies. The scope of awareness and the degree of generality are relative to each system of knowledge as indicated in Figure 5. It shows that the scope of awareness and the degree of generality can be understood as a field of tendencies. Various accounts of social problems such as a newspaper editorial or a research article in a scholarly journal can be located in various zones. Bulls-eye accuracy is impossible.

A central theme of this essay is that sociologists and journalists share a deep and broad entanglement with common sense ideas. Both professional fields make much noise about their objectivity and professional detachment from the passions of partisan affairs. They often claim neutral ground in the swirling debates over controversial issues. Yet this neutrality should never be mistaken for the superiority of sociology or journalism over common sense thinking. The difficult task for thoughtful students is to understand the context in which professional knowledge producers such as sociology and journalism draw on the raw materials of everyday living to create written products: books, research articles, front page headlines, editorials. The key term is context. Sociology and journalism both function as knowledge-producing enterprises in the larger context of the changing common sense constructions of human affairs. But this context is not one

Figure 5

Perceptive Field to Assess Social Problems:

Common Sense, Journalism, Sociology

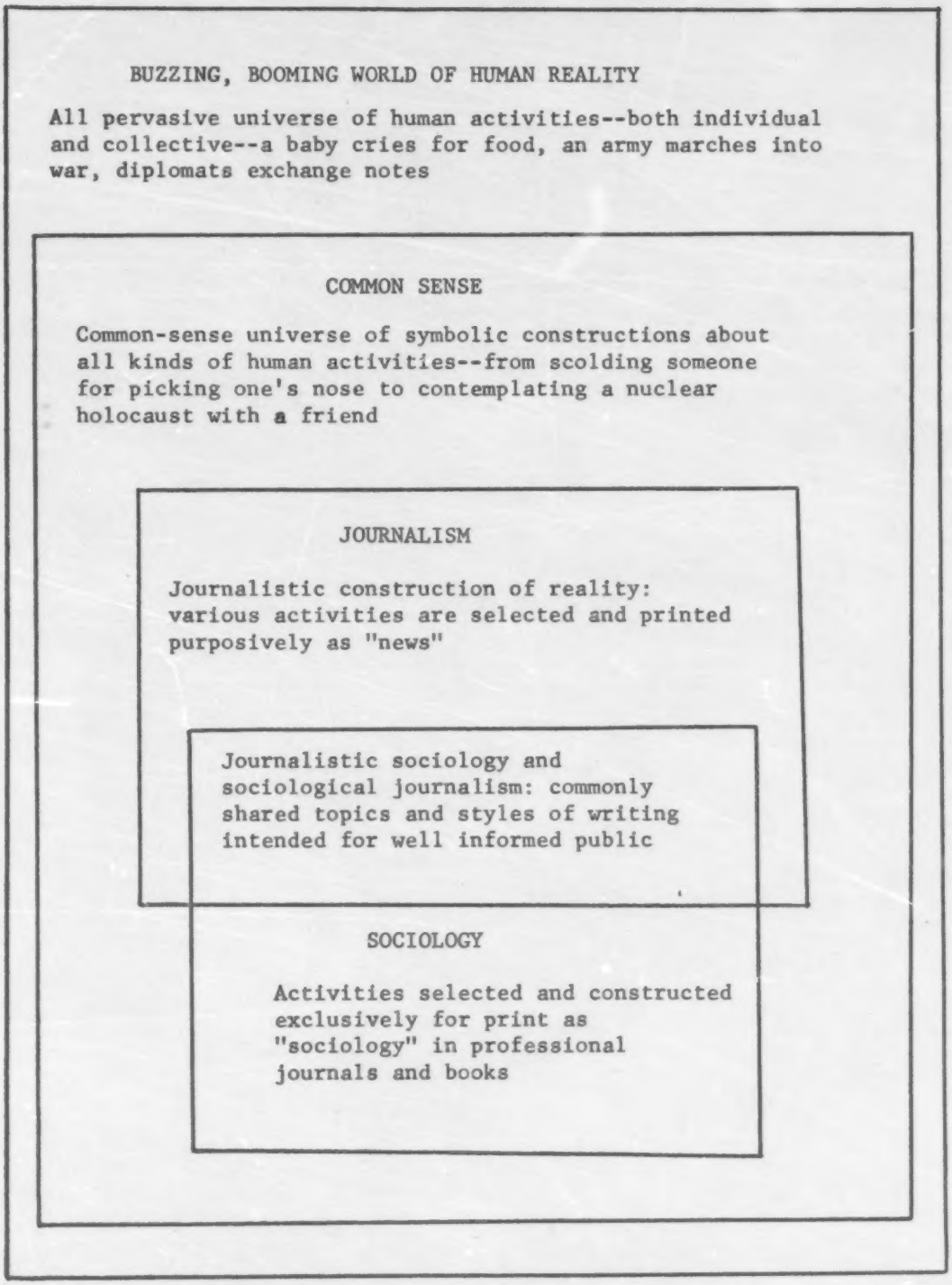


of simple harmony; for many reasons, sociologists, and journalists often find themselves in tension and conflict with some segments of the public. Occasions of tension are especially frequent in the investigations of controversial social problems.

Both sociology and journalism cover a range of topics and interests. Daily metropolitan newspapers report the gamut from advice for working mothers to international trade agreements. Likewise, sociology has extended its vision to every corner of the social universe. There is a sociology of aging, art, economics, education, family, humor, medicine, music, politics, rumor, science, sports, ... Sociology differs from journalism not in the topics it covers but the manner in which topics are observed and analyzed. The diversity of professional styles in these 2 broad fields of social investigation and writing has created important hybrids: journalistic sociologists such as Nathan Glazer and sociological journalists such as Charles Silberman. In Figure 6 sociology and journalism are surrounded by the larger world of common sense constructions and occasionally seem to converge on common territory. Figure 6 sketches a map of the 3 principle knowledge systems central to examination of the various social problems found in the social awareness modules.

Figure 6

Common Sense, Journalism, and Sociology in Context


BUZZING, BOOMING WORLD OF HUMAN REALITY
All pervasive universe of human activities--both individual and collective--a baby cries for food, an army marches into war, diplomats exchange notes
COMMON SENSE
Common-sense universe of symbolic constructions about all kinds of human activities--from scolding someone for picking one's nose to contemplating a nuclear holocaust with a friend
JOURNALISM
Journalistic construction of reality: various activities are selected and printed purposively as "news"
Journalistic sociology and sociological journalism: commonly shared topics and styles of writing intended for well informed public
SOCIOLOGY
Activities selected and constructed exclusively for print as "sociology" in professional journals and books

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CHAPTER 3

GUIDELINES TO CRITICAL REASONING

GUIDELINES FOR CRITICAL REASONING: ANALYZING THE ADEQUACY OF STATEMENTS ABOUT SOCIAL PROBLEMS

Paul J. Baker

Invitation to Social Awareness introduces readers to 3 perspectives about the social world: common sense, journalism, and sociology. These 3 perspectives are outlined in terms of a simple two-variable model: (1) Scope of Awareness, (2) Degree of Generality. The broader societal context is discussed in which common sense, journalism, and sociology are interrelated. The essay overview and the two-variable model help to sort out social information ranging from Dear Abby to a scholarly article on international relations. The two-variable model helps place an array of statements about the social world in a broader framework. It facilitates a perspective on information expressed through common sense discourse, in daily newspapers, and in sociology journals but does not tell us how people think. The model does not provide readers with guidelines about the comparative process of critical thinking that occurs between certain statements on a given topic. Social problems, then, can be assessed in two ways: (1) from 1 of the 3 broad perspectives about the social world using, for example, crime stories from various journalism sources, (2) between 2 of the perspectives such as an interpretation of rising crime rates by journalists and by sociologists. This guide presents a simple analytical model to help readers assess the reasoning found in various statements about social problems.

Philosophers of Western Civilization have devoted more than 2000 years to sharpening the skills of critical thinking. The historical record of the power of human reason is one of the most exciting treasures in higher education. There are 5 guidelines in this essay: (1) definition of the problem, (2) assessment of evidence, (3) determination of the cause-effect relationships, (4) clarification of value judgments, (5) assessment of the logical consistency of stated solutions to the problem. These guidelines facilitate critical thinking about various statements which call attention to the social problems of our day.

Statements about social problems are found in many forms. Newspaper accounts may simply describe an event in a short paragraph; on other occasions newspapers present a detailed interpretation of a social problem which has unfolded over several years. Sociologists often write short papers on a social issue and occasionally a paper is published as a book. Various degrees of attention are given to the 5 guidelines of critical thinking. Some statements give a vague definition of a problem, offer nothing about the evidence, and proclaim an emphatic solution. For example, after a brutal rape- murder case in Philadelphia an angry citizen wrote the following letter to the editor:

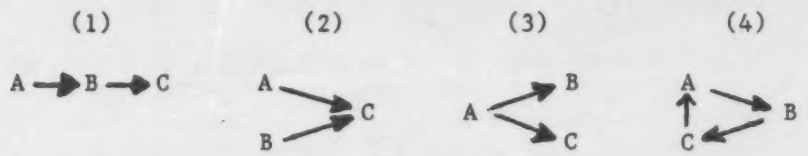
"I heartily agree with [the person] who wrote that the whipping post should be brought back. For the last 10 years, that has been my outcry also. After two or three rapists got 30 lashes in City Hall court yard, I'm sure the others would wise up" (Philadelphia Inquirer, April 23, 1966). On other occasions, journalism accounts emphasize evidence and say little or nothing about definitions, cause-effect relationship, or solutions (e.g., a feature story with many photographs about all the potholes in the city). Sociologists write about social problems yet customarily say very little about solutions. A careful reading of sociology accounts often suggests that a solution is imminent. Readers must learn to think about the 5 guidelines of critical thinking without expecting them to be spelled out in bold print.

1. Definition of the Problem. An inquiry should begin with both broad and narrow questions such as: "What is the author's main concern?" "Does the author delineate the topic with clarity?" "What is the basic issue to the author?" "Does the author present diffuse and vague generalities?" Students should reduce each of these questions to 1 or 2 succinct sentences and read carefully the key terms, definitions, and phrases. Is the use of words consistent with definitions found in a standard dictionary? Does the author give terms a special meaning so that they are understood only in the context of the total statement? Do some words have double meanings and mislead the reader? If authoritative definitions are used in government reports or by scientists can such definitions be examined for clarity?

2. Assessment of Evidence. The assessment of evidence is approached in radically different ways depending on the document. In some instances authors discuss a problem by using sweeping generalizations such as: "Judges are lenient on criminals." "The American government has turned its back on the poor." Other authors discuss a social problem by concentrating on a few illustrious cases. For example, a journalist might probe the problem of delinquent gangs by describing the activities of 2 or 3 innercity groups. In another instance the evidence might consist of statistical reports generated by a government agency. A critical thinker must learn to assess statements in terms of 3 basic issues: (1) Adequate information sources. Is there a clear indication of the sources in the presentation of the evidence? Is it possible to confirm or corroberate sources by consulting standard reference works? (2) Overgeneralization and scanty evidence. Sometimes statements are made in terms of "all" or "none" while a more thoughtful approach would be the use of qualifiers such as "rare," "a few," "some," "many," or "most." Does the author have knowledge of the evidence in order to refine generalizations with appropriate qualifications? Are there counter examples which refute or diminish the sweep and scope of a generalization? Sometimes statements of social problems are based on personal experiences; do authors of such statements generalize beyond the range of their experience?

(3) Reliable statements of observation. A reader must be sensitive to bias and understand a link between the sample and the population it alleges to represent. In the early 1950s Kinsey conducted a famous study of the sexual activities of American women. His sample was represented disproportionately by coeds and female prisoners, hardly a cross section of American women. A critical thinker must understand the relationship between a particular technique of observation and the type of conditions under which information is acquired; for example, crime statistics are strikingly different when obtained from such varied sources of information as the Uniform Crime Reports (police records compiled by the FBI) and victim surveys.

3. Determination of the Cause-Effect Relationships. People who think about social problems often ask questions about cause and effect. Such inquiry is unavoidable and natural in the study of human affairs. "Why is Johnny flunking math?" "Why is inflation so hard to control?" "What causes poverty?" Ordinary citizens, journalists, and sociologists probe for answers to the why and the how of social problems. Critical thinking begins by identifying the two key parts of any causal statement: cause and effect. A simple question involving cause and effect often becomes complex. In many cases several causal factors are related to many effects. Multi-causal relationships become complicated when only 3 or 4 factors are involved. Some logical possibilities derived from 3 variables illustrate this complexity. The following variables suggest 4 hypothetical causal models: A = social class background of parents; B = degree of success in acquiring a good education; C = degree of success in finding a good job with advancement opportunities.



All 4 hypothetical models can be rejected and an alternative causal explanation diagrammed.

It is important to distinguish between specific and general causal statements. Some people argue that Watergate was caused by the personality flaws of one man while others believe that Watergate was a symptom of a more general problem of centralized power in a time of domestic and international tension.

The meaning of cause-effect relationships can be clarified by understanding the logical principles of necessary and sufficient conditions. It is an oversimplification to think that one factor is always the cause of another (e.g., A causes B). It is important to distinguish 2 aspects in which A is a cause of B: (1) A is a necessary condition for B, (2) A is a sufficient condition for B.

If A is a sufficient condition for B it means that whenever A occurs B must follow. This does not rule out other reasons sufficient for producing B. For example, a poor vocabulary is a sufficient condition to cause a low IQ score but there are other causes for low IQ scores (e.g., limited mental capacity as a biological fact of life). When A is a necessary condition for B it means that if A does not occur B cannot occur. But this does not mean that B always occurs when A occurs. Thus, an adequate vocabulary is no guarantee of a high IQ score. Formally speaking, an adequate vocabulary is a necessary though not sufficient condition for a high IQ score. Limited mental capacity as a biologically determined fact is both a necessary and sufficient condition to cause a low IQ score. Other factors such as race are neither necessary nor sufficient to explain high or low IQ scores.

4. Clarification of Value Judgments. Any discussion of social problems leads to inevitable value judgments. Value judgments may be stimulated by a casual conversation, a political speech, or a magazine article. In each instance, people evaluate some aspect of the social problem. Value judgments are natural. "Kennedy is a good politician." "Watergate was a national disgrace." "Nuclear power plants are hazardous." Values are taken for granted but critical reasoning demands that judgmental words which make value claims on others are scrutinized.

Critical thinkers who study social problems recognize the need to clarify value statements. The first step in this process is the identification of value objects and evaluative terms. Value objects can be: physical objects (nuclear plants), events (the assassination of John Kennedy), people (the Boston Strangler), actions (smoking pot), institutions (the family), communities (Chicago), groups (the Mafia). Value objects can refer to particular persons or places (Nixon, San Clemente), or general categories (politicians, cities). Sometimes value objects are highly specific (the nuclear accident at Three Mile Island) while on other occasions the reference is vague (capitalism). Evaluative terms can prescribe action by stating what ought to or should be done. An elementary scheme to classify value judgments is the 3-fold division of positive evaluation, negative evaluation, and neutral evaluation. Many words such as authentic, bad, decent, nice, sincere, strong, rancorous, and wholesome are used as evaluative terms; in each case a term designates a preferential meaning for a specific object.

It is important to clarify the criteria being used to assert value judgments. By what standard does one decide what is good or bad? Value criteria are derived from many sources such as the influence of religious beliefs, a political philosophy, science, or the ideology of capitalism. A critical thinker should ask: Is the criteria sufficiently clear to understand how a given value judgment is made?

Critical thinkers distinguish between factual and evaluative statements, making the distinction easily in some cases. For example, "Ronald Reagan is President of the United States" is a very different statement than "Ronald Reagen is a good president." Many statements such as "Ronald Reagan is often ambiguous and indecisive on domestic policy issues" are subtle, however, making it difficult to distinguish fact from value. Some people would argue that the phrase "often ambiguous and indecisive" is a factual description of Ronald Reagan's presidential record. Others would perceive the same words as evaluative and minimally factual. While a clear distinction between fact and values is not always possible a better grasp of the intentions of the author can be obtained by studying the context in which the statement is made. This often helps to clarify assumptions and implicit value judgments.

5. Assessment of Logical Consistency in Stated Solutions. Students should reflect on the first 4 guidelines of critical thinking as logical pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Does the author sustain a consistent line of reasoning when discussing definitions, evidence, causality, and values? Critical assessment of the consistency of the line of reasoning involves 2 basic issues:

1. A clear line of reasoning should exist in discussions of both micro and macro dimensions of social reality.

2. Definitions, causal statements, and value commitments imply the potential for different types of interventionist strategies.

The first issue is posed sometimes as a question of reductionism: can macro questions be answered with observations and data derived at the micro level? If students define race relations as an interpersonal problem (too many prejudiced people) then they find it impossible logically to leap to an economic and political solution at the macro level (provide more jobs with massive federal aid for blacks). No scholarly or popular account of which we are aware analyzes the race relations problem in a coherent line of reasoning at both the micro and macro levels. Sociology textbooks typically take a bi-level approach by stressing the distinction between prejudice and discrimination. The inadequacy of social psychological definitions of social structural problems became increasingly apparent in the 1960s when social critics shifted the definition of the race problem from personal to institutional racism. The second issue involves establishing a line of reasoning which provides the plausibility or implausibility of solutions through deliberate intervention (e.g., legislative action). Many journalists, politicians, and social scientists have expressed confidence in the ability of government leaders to solve major social problems. While this interventionist view may be the prevailing ideology among many people it is possible logically to state the futility of some interventionist schemes. The goal is not to promote solutions to social problems but rather to detect flaws in the reasoning found in the solutions others might offer.

Five guidelines of critical thinking have been outlined. Please read carefully the statement by Anne Follis in the Christian Science Monitor. Then read my comments on her essay.

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR 2/27/79

Why homemakers have to have ERA

By Anne Follis

The economic, spiritual, and social value of the homemaker's contribution to society is immeasurable. The woman who gives up a career and puts aside an education to devote herself to the full-time nurturing and care of her family is performing perhaps the single most important job in this country. There is, however, a great inconsistency between the homemaker's worth and her legal status.

The Constitution of the United States was never intended, and has never been interpreted by the Supreme Court, to specifically prohibit discrimination based on sex under the law in all areas. Denied many basic legal rights, American homemakers (whether personally affected by it or not) are in a very precarious legal position and must depend on weaker state constitutions and on the whims of lawmakers and the courts. A survey of state laws that discriminate against married women makes it dramatically clear that no one stands to gain more from ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment than the homemaker.

The principle upon which the US Constitution and the laws of most states were written is English common law, which said: "By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law . . . the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage." As recently as 1970 the state court declared that a wife was "at most a superior servant to her husband . . . only chattel with no personality, no property, and no legally recognized feelings or rights." (Clouston v. Remlinger, Ohio, 1970.)

State laws in Arkansas and Louisiana deny homemakers equal property rights with their husbands. In South Dakota and Georgia a husband can disinherit his wife. In New York a husband can move and, if his wife refuses to follow him, she can be sued for desertion. If the wife leaves and the husband refuses to follow – she can also be sued for desertion.

In 1963 a Wisconsin homemaker died, having put aside two savings accounts totalling $5,000 in trust in her sons' names, so that they could have a college education. Her husband went to court to get the money, saying: "I earned that money, and I never gave it away. The surplus belongs to me." The court agreed, in spite of his wife's years of devotion as a homemaker. If it had not been for her unpaid labor, plus her years of careful economizing, there would have been no surplus! Nevertheless, all of her scrimping and saving to assure her sons of an education were an exercise in futility. (Rasmussen v. Oshkosh Savings & Loan Assn., 35 Wisc. 2nd 605, 1968.)

Even a wife's "right" to be supported by her husband is entrenched in the common law principle that regards the husband as the head of the family and the wife as his property, and is for all practical purposes completely unenforceable in an ongoing marriage. A husband can have lots of money but spend it drinking and gambling, or he can be a miser and bank his money, while keeping his family in poverty conditions. His wife may be the most devoted wife and mother in the world, but she has no legal means to obtain anything from him that he doesn't *choose* to give her as long as the marriage remains intact.

The Equal Rights Amendment will establish that the wife is a partner in the family enterprise and will lead to legal recognition, for the first time, of the homemaker's nonmonetary contribution to the family welfare. It will allow husbands who are kind and generous to remain that way, but it will also assure wives of important rights not dependent on the generosity of their husbands.

There has been a great deal of rhetoric about the partnership of marriage and the importance of homemaking and the rewards of mothering, but there has been precious little action to make it an economically secure and dignified role. The Equal Rights Amendment will raise the legal status of the homemaker, and strengthen the family unit. In an age of instability, uncertainty, and deteriorating family life, it is needed now more than it has ever been.

Mrs. Follis is the president of Housewives for ERA, headquartered in Urbana, Illinois.

Definition of the Problem. Follis offers a basic definition of the problem in the last sentence of the first paragraph. She argues that there is a great inconsistency between the worth of the female homemaker (which is very high) and her legal status (which is very low). This broad statement rests on some key terms: homemaker, legal status, legal rights, legal recognition, legal position, English common law. Clearly, the central concern is the vulnerability of married women who are sometimes defined in a legally inferior way. Such unfair treatment is consistent with the Constitution of the United States.

Assessment of Evidence. Follis presents a series of case studies which prove her contention that in some instances married women have been denied equal privileges under the law. Since none of these cases was ever reversed by the Supreme Court the empirical generalization can be made that some married women in some states are faced with unfair treatment under existing laws. One assumes--though the issue is never spelled out explicitly--that passage of the ERA would reverse court opinions in every case Follis cites.

Determination of the Cause-Effect Relationships. The key causal factor contributing to the legal subservience of women in the home is English common law. The passage of ERA would end this discriminatory tradition. Follis makes another causal statement which might be more difficult to demonstrate empirically: "The Equal Rights Amendment will raise the legal status of the homemaker and strengthen the family unit" [emphasis mine]. The last paragraph suggests that somehow the added dignity of the wife (gained through ERA) will make husband and wife more secure in their marriage. Perhaps Follis does not imply a closer bond between husband and wife but rather suggests that women will be more successful through their enhanced dignity regardless of the opinions or feelings of their husbands.

Clarification of Value Judgments. This essay leaves little doubt about basic value judgments; it is strongly favorable to the family and ERA. The woman who cares for her family "is performing perhaps the single most important job in this country." Opponents of ERA often argue that their opposition is grounded in firm convictions for a family life. They assert that high evaluation of ERA means a low evaluation of family life. Follis counters this view by placing high evaluation on both ERA and the family. The value object of greatest concern is the wife. The dignity of the woman in the home requires the legal protection of ERA.

Assessment of Logical Consistency in Stated Solution. The dominant theme of this essay is the urgent need for a solution. The definition, evidence, cause-effect relationships, and solution seem to hold together on the legal issues. Follis claims also that ERA would help to solve the problems of "instability, uncertainty, and deteriorating family life." The line of reasoning is not developed to support this argument.

My comments are not exhaustive and other critical points can be made. For example, given the leadership role of Follis in the ERA movement, what can be said about bias in her argument?

Statements about social problems are rarely accepted as the final word on a particular topic. In some instances statements provide the impetus for extending the dialogue. Such is the case with the essay by Anne Follis. In Letters to the Editor, Phyllis Schlafly, an active opponent of ERA, and Nancy Newman, Vice President of the League of Women Voters, call attention to inaccurate information about a 1970 court decision in Ohio. Newman explains that Follis obtained her information on the Ohio case from an "uncorrected edition" of a League publication, "In Pursuit of Equal Rights: Women in the Seventies." Schlafly caught the error and made the most of it to undermine Follis' line of reasoning (April 12, 1979).

These letters offer an interesting example of the inconclusive nature of evidence. Schlafly uses the Ohio case as "new proof that wives don't need ERA to assert their rights." Follis acknowledges her error but claims the "article had a great deal more to say." The evidence may have changed slightly but Follis stands behind her original line of reasoning. Newman also concedes misinformation about the Ohio court case but quickly shifts the argument to new evidence (a Georgia case) which supports the original thesis by Follis.

The ERA letters further illustrate a central problem for most citizens who attempt to understand social problems. It is exceedingly difficult to appraise evidence which is provided by authors who claim to be experts. Few readers of the Christian Science Monitor are sufficiently trained in law to recognize the misinterpretation of a 1970 Ohio court case. Even those readers trained in legal matters are not likely to spend several hours at the law library verifying the evidence. It is helpful to study many statements about a social problem from different experts who have divergent value positions. Hopefully, the exchange of views among contending parties will lead to clarification of central issues. A citizen who aims to be well informed will benefit by careful study of diverse literature.

It is important to conclude with a note on the importance of using the 5 guidlines of critical thinking as guidelines to reasoning. They are not presented as rigid prescriptions for all occasions of critical thinking. The task of critical reasoning can not be reduced to fail-safe formulas which can be applied mechanically with equal ease to all instances. An active imagination is essential to any deeper understanding of social problems. Hopefully, creative spirit and critical judgment can find common ground in this important intellectual task.

CHAPTER 4

CLASSROOM EPISODES DESIGNED TO PROMOTE CRITICAL REASONING

EPISODE 1

Assessing the Importance of News Events

This exercise focuses on the messages conveyed about social problems by a typical metropolitan daily newspaper. The goal is to have students assess the nature of "newsworthiness." EPISODE 1 shows that journalists approach the topic of social problems from diverse perspectives.

CONCEPT AREA

1. "Newsworthiness."
2. Values (the civic or commercial importance of news events): The primary task concerning the values issue is to distinguish between the commercial importance of an event (i.e., space allocated) and the civic importance, (i.e., magnitude and impact on society). Sometimes there exists in journalism a clash of values between entertainment (for profit) and education (with risk of less profit).
3. Operational definitions.

TEACHING OBJECTIVE

1. To identify student perceptions of the characteristics which make a social problem important.
2. To operationalize this concept of "important" problems.
3. To determine in a sample of newspaper stories whether importance is related to newsworthiness.

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. Copy of a metropolitan daily newspaper for each student.
2. Prepared worksheet for analysis.

PROCEDURE

Instruct all students to bring to class a copy of a specific edition of a major daily newspaper. The instructor selects for the analysis ten stories dealing with personal or social problems. Calculate the number of square inches devoted to each story by multiplying the length x width of the article. (Accuracy is not obtained by measuring the number of column inches because of variance in the number of columns per page.)

If time permits ask students what they believe contributes to making a story important. Their comments generally reflect two dimensions: Scope of Impact and Duration of Impact. The prepared form is based on the assumption that comments reflect a widely shared common sense view. These dimensions involve the number of people affected by the event and the period of time through which the effects of the event will be felt. These ideas can be developed from student comments or presented by the instructor as a logical basis for evaluating importance. The following grid has been developed for ranking stories by importance.

Grid for Estimating Civic Importance of News Events

Duration of Impact	Scope of Impact: Local (1)	Metro/State (2)	National (3)	International (4)
Momentary, one day (1)				
One week to months (2)				
One year, few years (3)				
Several years to decades (4)				

Initially this form can be drawn on the board and used by students to assign each newspaper article to the appropriate cell. This is best accomplished in small groups, followed by a general discussion, and concluded with a final assignment to allow further calculations. A set of importance scores for the selected articles is obtained by multiplying the numbers which identify each row and column. Resulting scores (ranging from 1-16) assign less importance to events concerning a few people for brief time periods and more importance to events affecting a large number of people for a long time period. The comparison between civic importance and commercial newsworthiness is obtained by listing side by side in rank order civic scores and space allocation. If a rank order is desired, correlation may be computed. Generally students are asked to draw a line from the position of an article on one list to its position on the other. This technique allows them to observe the difference between the two rankings and to see which articles contribute most to the differences. Focus discussion on the types of stories which receive much or little space and on considerations, other than importance, that determine their treatment. Prominence in newspapers of human interest stories is one easily identifiable pattern. The overriding importance of profit in determining newsworthiness is also easy to document. The extensive space devoted to events which will be displaced or changed in some way by events of the following day (e.g., sports, markets, obituaries) should also be obvious. The instructor concludes the discussion by noting the implication of news items selected by editors as information items about social problems. The newspaper is examined as a form of commercial knowledge; its affinity to common sense is demonstrated.

POSSIBLE PITFALLS

Importance and size could be positively correlated in a specific set of articles. This is unlikely but to avoid it select 2 or 3 sets of 10 articles. This will show additionally that several patterns are possible (generally ranging from no relationship to a strongly negative one). A more systematic approach might involve a sampling design.

EPISODE 2

Identifying Types of Knowledge in Newspaper

EPISODE 2 is designed to allow students to apply the twofold typology (Scope of Awareness and Degree of Generality) developed in "Social Awareness and Social Problems" to actual news articles in a metropolitan daily newspaper. It clarifies the nature of the typology (see page 22) and demonstrates its usefulness.

CONCEPT AREA

Key concepts are the distinctions between Micro- and Macro-level and those between Concrete vs. Abstract forms of knowledge in newspapers and magazines.

TEACHING OBJECTIVE

1. To illustrate the usefulness of analytical typologies.
2. To demonstrate the application of Baker's typology for forms of knowledge to journalistic materials.
3. To increase student awareness of the kinds of social knowledge and the relative frequency of different kinds of social problems statements in the daily newspaper.

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. "Social Awareness and Social Problems."
2. Copy of a specific edition of a metropolitan daily newspaper for each student.

PROCEDURE

Students read the introductory essay. The instructor identifies those news articles which have some social problems relevance. Distribute a list which provides the titles and page numbers of the articles to be analyzed.

Distribute to students in small groups the list of articles and ask them to determine where each article fits in the typology. Draw the following diagram on the board and review the categories.

	Micro	Macro
Concrete	stories about private affairs	stories about public affairs
Abstract	analyses of private affairs	analyses of public affairs

After all groups have categorized all selected items, poll the class as to the placement of each news item. Some will have been placed effortlessly with virtually no disagreement; others will have been assessed differently by different groups. Draw out the logic behind any disagreement and try to resolve it. If the article embodies elements which cross boundaries suggested by the typology, acknowledge this and discuss the inherent limitations of any typology to accommodate every observation.

Discussion should emphasize the existence of all 4 types of journalistic ways of knowing. Discussion should also point out and include comment on the relative frequency of the different types. This is related to the ambivalence in journalism between commercial and informational goals of publishing.

POSSIBLE PITFALLS

No major problems have been noted. It is probably best to limit the number of articles to about 12 and to include at least one example of each type. Student confusion tends to occur most during discrimination between story and analysis. This may be due to a weakness in the typology, result of some characteristic of journalistic style, or a student tendency to blur this distinction. All 3 possibilities should be considered. The most frequent disagreement or misunderstanding occurs when an opinion is presented as part of a story. This is generally discussed as a matter of framing. The larger frame determines the classification.

EPISODE 3

Identifying Types of Sociology Knowledge Via Abstracts

The typology of social knowledge begun in EPISODE 2 is applied to sociological writing.

CONCEPT AREA

Polar tendencies in sociology:

1. Micro and macro perspectives.
2. Concrete and abstract emphases.

TEACHING OBJECTIVE

1. To illustrate the usefulness of analytical typologies.
2. To demonstrate the application of Baker's twofold typlogy of forms of knowledge to sociological materials.
3. To increase student awareness of the diversity of knowledge pertinent to social problems found in sociological journals.

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. "Social Awareness and Social Problems."
2. Copies of 12 or so abstracts of journal articles on social problems.

PROCEDURE

Assign "Social Awareness and Social Problems." Select some abstracts of sociological writing on social problems from Sociological Abstracts or the actual journals to include each of the different types. It may be possible to select all abstracts from a single journal (Note: Social Problems has been used in this way). Or the diversity within sociology may be demonstrated by selections from many different publications.

Distribute copies of all the abstracts to each student. Assign students to small groups to categorize each abstract according to the following diagram and to develop an explanation for their decision. Draw the following diagram on the board and review each category.

	Micro	Macro
Concrete	Micro-Empirical	Macro-Empirical
Abstract	Micro-Theoretical	Macro-Theoretical

After all groups have classified each abstract, poll students regarding their decisions. Summarize the results on the board. In the event of disagreements each alternative should be explained by its proponent. Encourage the class to eliminate logically all but one category. Assist students if they cannot decide a case in which one

interpretation seems clearly preferable. Explain the line of reasoning. If there are unresolvable ambiguities, confirm them, and use the opportunity to stress that typologies cannot capture every observation completely. If the selection of articles is representative, attention can be drawn to the relative frequency of different types. It should be clear that all 4 types are represented to some degree in sociology.

POSSIBLE PITFALLS

Students need help in recognizing that the micro-level in sociology is not as micro (personal) as it is in journalism or everyday conversation. Also, they may need to be reminded that, although little sociological writing appears to be opinion, it can be described as abstract. Given the limited sociology background of most students it is probably best to avoid using abstracts which employ technical jargon or specialized theories.

EPISODE 4

Assessing the Line of Reasoning in Statements About a Social Problem

EPISODE 4 focuses on the central task of the social problems course. Students are required to think critically about social problems by examining the statements of sociologists and journalists. This task begins by helping students recognize and use the rudimentary elements of critical thinking.

CONCEPT AREA

Five topics of critical reasoning are used that are especially pertinent to the study of social problems:

1. Definition of problem.
2. Assessment of evidence.
3. Determination of cause-effect relationships.
4. Clarification of value judgments.
5. Assessment of logical consistency in statements of solution or refutation of solution.

TEACHING OBJECTIVE

1. Help students to recognize some of the key elements of reasoning found in all non-fictional statements of social problems.
2. Provide students with the elemental thinking tools needed to determine the logical adequacy of statements about social problems.
3. Challenge the long-standing habits of students to passively accept the printed page; students are less intimidated because they have the necessary learning tools to be more active readers and thinkers of the printed page.
4. Help students to appreciate the value of generic reasoning skills which can be applied to a variety of case materials.

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. "Guidelines For Critical Reasoning: Analyzing the Adequacy of Statements About Social Problems," by Paul J. Baker. This essay discusses briefly the 5 topics of critical reasoning mentioned above in CONCEPT AREA.
2. "Student Guide: Assessing the Adequacy of a Social Problem Statement" (see attached document).
3. A variety of case materials can be used--magazine articles, commentaries from the editorial page of newspapers, chapters from textbooks, selections from readers. The chief criterion of an article is that it is a self contained statement--a complete statement in which a line of reasoning has been developed. Heavily edited excerpts are inappropriate. An abbreviated statement might be an inaccurate representation of the line of reasoning orginally developed by an author. Since the assignment attempts to determine the adequacy of an author's reasoning, it is only fair to honor the integrity of an author's original presentation.

PROCEDURE

There are many variations on this learning episode. The most typical format is described. The first step requires students to read Baker's easay, "Guidelines for Critical Reasoning: Analyzing the Adequacy of Statements About Social Problems." They are assigned to bring to class an application of the guidelines to a specific reading assignment (e.g., a selection from a reader). The task of applying the 5 topics of reasoning is aided by a student guide which identifies specific questions to be asked for each topic (see attached document).

During the first portion of the class (approximately 15-20 minutes) students meet in small groups to review their notes on the logical adequacy of the statement. This peer interaction helps students feel less threatened by the ambiguity of the assignment. They also realize that different interpretations of logical adequacy require further thought.

The last portion of the class (20-30 minutes) is devoted to de-briefing the discussion groups. Student participation is critical at this point. They must analyze the author's line of reasoning by examining critically each of the 5 topics of critical thinking.

An alternate method of teaching the 5 topics of critical reasoning is to assign 2 articles and have students make comparative assessments regarding the relative adequacy of each statement. For example, students are asked to determine which article develops stronger supporting evidence.

EPISODE 4 is repeated on numerous occasions throughout the semester. As the semester progresses, questions about the logical adequacy of statements become more elaborate and rigorous.

POSSIBLE PITFALLS

The teacher must start slowly and move toward greater elaboration and rigor. Critical reasoning cannot be taught all at once as a single self contained classroom exercise. Students become confused and overwhelmed. For many students the thought of being critical in the classroom is a novel experience. They are unsure of themselves and it takes time to establish trust with the teacher. It is also important to let students discover the logical limitations of the author. The teacher must refrain from the common practice of telling students the "right answer." The discussion group format helps to mediate the tendency by the teacher to dominate the situation. Often a classroom session is concluded with key questions left unanswered. On return to class students continue their unfinished work of determining the logical adequacy of the author's line of reasoning.

STUDENT GUIDE: ASSESSING THE ADEQUACY OF A SOCIAL PROBLEM STATEMENT

Author_____ Title_____

1. Defining the Problem
   a. Is the author's major thesis clearly stated?

   b. Are key terms and definitions clearly stated?

2. Assessing Evidence
   a. Are sources of information clearly identified?

   b. Are sweeping generalizations offered without appropriate qualifications?

   c. Is evidence sufficiently objective for purposes at hand?

   d. Is evidence sufficiently accurate for purposes at hand?

3. Determining Cause-Effect Relationships
   a. Is a simple cause and effect statement made? Or is causal model complex with several causes and effects?

   b. Are causal statements plausible and empirically sound?

4. Clarifying Value Judgments
   a. Are value objects and evaluative terms clearly stated?

   b. Are criteria of value judgments defensible?

   c. Are factual statements distinguished from evaluative statements?

5. Logical Consistency

a. Does the author offer a statement of solution or refutation of solution?

b. Are the four above topics of reasoning (definitions, evidence, causality, values) related to the solution (non-solution) statement?

c. Does the author offer a consistent line of reasoning when discussing definitions, evidence, causality, values, and solutions (non-solutions)?

d. Using the 5 topics of reasoning, can the line of reasoning be outlined in summary fashion?

EPISODE 5

The 24-Hour Quiz: Rehearsing Critical Thinking Skills Outside the Classroom

EPISODE 5 rests on a well established maxim of educational research. Academic achievement is best enhanced by continuous practice and frequent feedback which corrects for errors or incomplete learning. Frequent practice and evaluation are necessary for the cultivation of critical thinking skills. Classroom commitments in a social problems course do not allow sufficient time for writing activities. This time constraint has been overcome by devising a learning procedure in which most of the students' work occurs outside the classroom. The 24-Hour Quiz is a special variation of the learning assignment described in EPISODE 4.

CONCEPT AREA

The topics of critical reasoning discussed in EPISODE 4 are discussed in this episode:

1. Definition of problem.
2. Assessment of evidence.
3. Determination of cause-effect relationships.
4. Clarification of value judgments.
5. Assessment of logical consistency in statements of solution or refutation of solution.

TEACHING OBJECTIVE

The first 4 objectives mentioned in EPISODE 4 are used in this episode:

1. Help students to recognize some of the key elements of reasoning found in all non-fictional statements of social problems.
2. Provide students with the elemental thinking tools needed to determine the logical adequacy of statements about social problems.
3. Challenge the long-standing habits of students to passively accept the printed page (students are less intimidated because they have the necessary learning tools to be more active readers and thinkers of the printed page).
4. Help students to appreciate the value of generic reasoning skills which can be applied to a variety of case materials.
5. An additional teaching objective is the strengthening of critical thinking skills by persistent practice and evaluation.

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. "Guidelines to Critical Reasoning: Analyzing the Adequacy of Statements about Social Problems," by Paul J. Baker.
2. "Student Guide: Assessing the Adequacy of a Social Problem Statement" (see document attached to EPISODE 4).
3. A variety of case materials.
4. "Instructions and Guided Outline for Critical Thinking About a Social Problem" (see attached document).

PROCEDURE

At the end of a classroom session students are given an assignment of one article about a social problem. A 2-page handout, "Instructions and Guided Outline for Critical Thinking About a Social Problem" accompanies this reading assignment. Within the next 24 hours students are expected to read the article, take notes on the 5 topics of critical reasoning, and write a critical analysis. The notes and critical essay are submitted to the teacher's office 24 hours prior to the next class session. The teacher grades the papers and during the next class, returns the critical essays. Twenty minutes are set aside for discussion of the assignment. To illustrate the time cycle: If the class meets on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday and students receive their assignment on Monday, then they would submit their critical essays on Tuesday. The teacher would evaluate the papers and return to class on Wednesday for discussion. The practice evaluation procedure can be repeated as often as the teacher deems necessary. Typically this assignment is used 4-5 times per semester. The 24-Hour Quiz is evaluated as part of the grade.

On all occasions classroom discussion which accompanies the 24-Hour Quiz is informed and animated. Students come to class on these days well prepared and willing to discuss the merits and demerits of the assigned article.

POSSIBLE PITFALLS

The most serious difficulty with EPISODE 5 is the heavy reading and grading assignment it places on the teacher. If one is teaching large sections the 24-Hour Quiz requires careful schedule planning. This is partially mitigated by the fact that the exercise involves continued and progressive reinforcement of the central learning experience. Consequently, the nature and amount of teacher response to individual papers tend to be reduced over time. The fact that general observations can be reinforced orally during class discussion also assists in reducing this problem.

INSTRUCTIONS AND GUIDED OUTLINE FOR CRITICAL THINKING ABOUT A SOCIAL PROBLEM

General Instructions

Read the following article about a social problem facing our society. Criticize the article as a statement of sound reasoning. Be sure to note both positive and negative aspects of the article. That is, point out those aspects of the article that represent sound reasoning; also call attention to aspects of the article that represent faulty reasoning.

In your assessment of the article be sure to note the following topics of reasoning:

1. The adequacy of statements about definitions.
2. The adequacy of statements about evidence.
3. The adequacy of statements about cause-effect relationships.
4. The adequacy of statements about value judgments.
5. The logical consistency of statements about solutions or the lack of solutions.

Specific Instructions

Develop your criticism of the article in three distinct stages.

1. Your first task is to read the article carefully.

2. Then re-read the article a second time and take notes on its points of sound and faulty reasoning. Use other side for notes.

3. Using these notes and any quotes you may want to use from the article, write a brief critical analysis of the article. Use attached page for your essay.

Student's Name_____ Name of Article_____

NOTES FOR CRITICAL THINKING Date_____

1. Notes on the adequacy of statements about definitions

2. Notes on the adequacy of statements about evidence

3. Notes on the adequacy of statements about cause-effect relationships

4. Notes on the adequacy of statements about value judgments

5. Notes on the logical consistency of statements about solutions or the lack of solutions

CRITICAL THINKING ABOUT A SOCIAL PROBLEM

Name_____Name of Article_____Date_____

Student's essay critically analyzing the article:

(Use both sides of sheet; extra paper is available if needed.)

EPISODE 6

Analyzing the Private Troubles of Dear Abby and Dear Ann

Sociology teachers often stress the importance of helping students avoid the pitfalls of psychological reductionism in their appraisal of social issues. One way to help students grasp a sociological interpretation is to clarify the distinction between personality and norms. All concrete social situations contain personalistic and normative elements. It is important to teach students how to make this distinction. The advice columns of "Dear Ann" and "Dear Abby" provide abundant case material for the development of these critical thinking skills.

CONCEPT AREA

Key concepts are norms and personality. Related ideas are personal pathology and social disorganization. EPISODE 6 also teaches about the commercial values of journalism and audience appeal.

TEACHING OBJECTIVE

1. Help students to distinguish between normative and personality components of a concrete social situation.
2. Help students to apply sociological concepts to an abundant source of journalistic case material.
3. Help students to better understand the relationship between the advice of columnists and the values of journalism.

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. Background statement, "Studying the Changing Norms of Family Living Through Dear Abby and Dear Ann" (see attached document).
2. A collection of Dear Abby or Dear Ann columns.

PROCEDURE

Students are asked to read the background statement. It is especially important to have students study the chart which presents normal and abnormal components of a social situation. Students then are asked to read 4 or 5 letters written to Abby (Ann). Each student examines each letter according to the following 5 points of inquiry:

1. Determine if the chief concern of the letter is psychological, normative, or both.
2. Identify and express in your own words the basic concern of the letter.
3. Predict the advice Abby (Ann) would give to the writer. Discuss her predicted advice in terms of the norms of family living and journalistic presentations of family problems.
4. Offer your advice and justify your thoughts in terms of your ideas of mental health and the norms of family life.
5. Discuss the following question: "Is there any discrepancy between my advice and justification and my perception of Abby's (Ann's) advice and my perception of her justification?"

Students then form small groups to share their initial assessment of the Abby (Ann) letters. The last portion of the class session (approximately 20 minutes) is spent at the blackboard reviewing student analysis of the letters. At that time the teacher discloses Abby's (Ann's) advice for each letter. Discussion then focuses on the journalistic character of the advice.

POSSIBLE PITFALLS

No serious pitfalls have been encountered. It is important to keep students focused on analytical issues of normative and personality components of social situations. They sometimes dwell on the concreteness of the situation.

STUDYING THE CHANGING NORMS OF FAMILY LIVING THROUGH "DEAR ABBY" AND "DEAR ANN"

Paul J. Baker

A few years ago people enjoyed repeating Bob Dylan: "The times they are a changin'." But what does it mean to say that times are changing? This assignment tackles one small aspect of the topic of social change by limiting the field of inquiry to changing sex roles and changing rules of family living. A strategy of inquiry is suggested here which uses popular writing as a source of evidence to study changing definitions of appropriate behavior.

Sociologists approach the topic of appropriate behavior by using the terms social norms and personality. The following are conventional definitions of these terms:

> Norms: A standard of correct, desirable, or appropriate behavior that is shared by members of a particular group and that directs what should not be done by certain individuals under certain specified circumstances.
>
> Personality: An individual's patterns of behavior, attitudes, values, beliefs which other people view as consistent and characteristic of that individual. Patterns are determined in part by biological, chemical, and social factors.

The study of social change for sociologists often involves an examination of changing norms. Social change occurs when the standards of correct or appropriate behavior are ambiguous or in conflict. People are no longer sure they know the right thing to do in certain circumstances. When norms are changing persons experience varying degrees of disorientation. Turning to friends or experts, they seek direction to overcome a sense of confusion.

In the areas of changing sex roles and family living, Abigal Van Buren and Ann Landers enjoy widespread recognition for their friendly advice. These columnists continually speak to many situations of ambiguity and uncertainty which characterize contemporary family living. Many letters express a common perplexity: Old rules seem inadequate for newly developed circumstances. Various members of the family no longer share common definitions of appropriate behavior. In these frustrating moments letter writers often turn to Abby or Ann to play the role of judge. As troubled persons the writers want someone to clarify the rules. On other occasions, writers solicit moral support as they seek allies in a heated family quarrel.

Abby and Ann provide answers which rely primarily on their common sense ideas. Their folk wisdom is frequently supplemented by the professional judgments of lawyers, psychiatrists, ministers, and social workers. This advice is not divinely inspired or absolute. It is socially constructed from taken-for-granted ideas of everyday life and frequently shifts with public sentiment. The letters and the advice are journalistic constructions of family living. By clarifying appropriate behavior for thousands of troubled persons during the past two decades, Abby and Ann have become important interpreters of changing domestic norms. Given the immense popularity of these sagacious women, it seems reasonable to suggest that a critical study of their columns would provide insights into one form of journalism about changing family relationships.

The advice columns of Abby and Ann always deal with the private affairs of troubled people. While troubles of disorientation as a result of changing norms have been mentioned, it is important to note that other types of troubles are also expressed in the letters. Some people seek advice about the rules of living, while others write because they face serious problems from psychological stress. Letters are always about social situations, and all social situations contain both psychological and normative components. Given these two components, it is possible to identify three types of letters: (1) primary emphasis on psychological factors, (2) primary emphasis on normative factors, (3) both normative and psychological factors.

The two components of any situation can be viewed as either normal or abnormal. All letters contain at least one element which could be defined as abnormal. This can be understood best by examining the following table:

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS OF LETTERS TO ABBY AND ANN

		Normative Component	
		Normal (rules are taken for granted as okay)	Abnormal (confusion, conflict, or problem about rules)
Psychological Component	Normal (person's mental capacities are taken for granted as okay)	A	C
	Abnormal (mental confusion, conflict, problem of psychological stress)	B	D

Cell A: Letters are never written when both psychological and normative aspects of a situation are okay. There is nothing to write about; no one has any complaint to make.

Cell B: Sometimes letter writers express personal mental stress or the mental abnormalities of someone else yet are satisfied with existing norms.

Cell C: These letter writers are concerned with the reverse situation of Cell B; they are not worried about mental disorders, but need guidance on some aspect of family norms.

Cell D: This type of letter expresses the intricate interrelationship of personality hang-ups and normative conflict.

EPISODE 7

Journalistic Application of Sociological Principles: A Test of The Kohlberg Thesis

The literature of journalism and sociology can be taught from a variety of ways. EPISODE 7 finds a journalism piece which uses a sociological theory and then assesses the logical skills of the journalist in applying the sociological principles. It is a case study of a journalist's explanation of marital fidelity according to Kohlberg's theory of moral development.

CONCEPT AREA

Key principles are:

1. The nature of definitions; operationalizing those definitions.
2. The assessment of cause-effect relationships.

TEACHING OBJECTIVE

1. Help students become aware of the manner in which some sociological principles are popularized by journalists.
2. Help students learn to assess cause-effect relationships.
3. Help students understand the difficulties of operationalizing concepts.

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. Copy of "Why Some Husbands Stay Faithful," by Norman Lobsenz (Reader's Digest, October 1977).
2. Statement of Lawrence Kohlberg's stages of moral development--Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, 1968 or Psychology Today, "The Child as a Moral Philosopher," September 1968.

PROCEDURE

Students read the Lobsenz essay and an account of Kohlberg's thesis. The first portion of the following class opens with a discussion of cause-effect relationships in human affairs. The teacher calls attention to the fact that the title of Lobsenz's article ("Why Some Husbands Stay Faithful") implies an inquiry into the complex question of causality.

Students then form small groups. The Lobsenz title is rephrased as a question--"Why do some husbands stay faithful?" In other words, according to Lobsenz, what causes some husbands to stay faithful? And obversely, what causes some husbands to be unfaithful? Students also assess the manner in which Lobsenz applies Kohlberg's thesis to demonstrate a causal relationship. The last portion of the period is devoted to debriefing the discussion groups and assessing the adequacy of Lobsenz's causal analysis of fidelity.

A short essay assignment is constructed from EPISODE 7:

> Is Lobsenz faithful to Kohlberg? Based on your reading of the Kohlberg and Lobsenz articles assess critically Lobsenz's application of Kohlberg's theory to explain marital fidelity.

POSSIBLE PITFALLS: None.

EPISODE 8

Student Surveys and Contrasting Perspectives: Poverty

The unit on social inequality focuses extensively on poverty, its definition, causes and consequences, and the competing views on each of these topics. EPISODE 8 has helped students tune into these issues.

CONCEPT AREA

1. Poverty.
2. Line of reasoning.
3. Operational definitions.

TEACHING OBJECTIVE

1. To assess common sense notions about the extent, definition, and implications of poverty in this society.
2. To provide the common sense data for comparison with journalistic and sociological accounts of this issue.

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. Student questionnaire (attached).

PROCEDURE

If the class is sufficiently large, students should interview one another during the class session. If the class is small they complete the interview schedule prior to class for 2-4 other students. In either case, after the interview is completed the student inteviewers are polled on the responses to each of the 6 questions and the various responses are summarized on the board. Students take notes on the results for comparison with the accounts in future reading assignments.

Typical patterns of response to each question should be highlighted. Generally there is substantial agreement among responses in the characterization of who the poor are and how their status is defined but the existence of variant definitions should be noted also. Often there is much less consistency in responses as to the size of the population which is poor. Discussion should be devoted to this observation. Allow speculation also on the possible explanations. The responses to the question of what causes poverty often repeat the statements of what defines it. Is this circular reasoning or does it illuminate the nature of the definitions being proposed? The questions on solutions allow an opportunity to stimulate discussion on how definitions may determine the outcome of an analysis. Are student responses consistent in their optimism or pessimism with the problem initially defined?

This summary provides students with a notion of the aspects of an issue that have wide common sense agreement and a sense for the aspects which show considerable variation in opinion or lack of specific knowledge. This provides a valuable baseline for comparison with "expert" views in subsequent assignments.

EPISODE 8 is intended as a sensitizing experience, and as such, the discussion should not be terminated by suggesting that there are "correct" answers. After consulting journalistic and sociological sources, students will be able to see that, for many of the questions, their disagreements are paralleled in published materials.

POSSIBLE PITFALLS: None.

SIX QUESTIONS ABOUT POVERTY

(In the interest of space, the 6 questions are placed here consecutively; when using them for EPISODE 8, place 3 questions on a page to leave room for the answers).

1. Who are the poor people in our society?

2. How does one define their status?

3. How many people are below the poverty line?

4. What are the causes of poverty?

5. What are the chances that poor people will overcome their poverty?

6. Is there any solution to the problems of poverty?

EPISODE 9

Student Surveys and Contrasting Perspectives: Social Inequality

The discussion of social inequality is much more productive and animated when students are provided the opportunity to state their perceptions of income distribution and to compare them with statistical data. Like the episode on poverty, EPISODE 9 is designed to bring to the surface the characteristic forms of common sense thinking about a social topic. Student opinions can then be compared more readily with other ways of knowing conveyed through reading assignments.

CONCEPT AREA

1. Social stratification.
2. Income distribution.
3. Wealth.
4. Poverty.
5. Statistical and graphic analysis.

TEACHING OBJECTIVE

1. To obtain and analyze students' common sense notions of the pattern of social inequality in this society.
2. To present statistical data (in graphic form) concerning the distribution of income in the U.S.
3. To compare and contrast the statistical data with the common sense views.

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. "Drawing a Graph about Social Inequality" (see attached document).
2. Poster, "Social Stratification in the United States," prepared by Stephen J. Rose, Social Graphics Company, OR
3. A graphic portrait of income distribution based on Statistical Abstract of the United States or other figures.
4. Handout, "A Graph about Social Inequality."

PROCEDURE

Students are given a copy of the worksheet "Drawing a Graph about Social Inequality." They use it to depict the proportion of people in each tenth of the income distribution. (This may require explanation. They must decide what the highest income levels are and then, having established a top beyond which there are too few people to easily count, divide the lower income levels into tenths of that amount. For each 10% of income level, students must assign some portion of the population so that the final result is a picture of what they think social inequality looks like. Graph cannot exceed 100%). They also identify the levels at which wealth and poverty are located.

The resulting graphs are collected and reviewed by the instructor prior to the next class at which time the patterns observed in the depictions are discussed. It is typical for most representations to appear as a slightly skewed normal distribution (few people at the top, slightly more at the bottom, most in the middle). Other patterns do appear, however, and often include such variants as: (1) only rich and poor, no middle, (2) totally equal proportions at all levels, (3) many poor and few wealthy.

The process of comparing these images with statistical "reality" is made marvelously convenient by the poster produced by Stephen Rose ("Social Stratification in the United States"). The teacher can present the actual income distribution quickly and discuss its connection to occupation, household type, and race. The distribution of wealth can be discussed also.

The positions of the income levels of the Bureau of Labor Statistics (High, Middle, and Low) are clearly marked as well as the Poverty level and the way in which these positions are defined can be discussed. The handout "Social Inequality: Locating Lines of Poverty and Wealth," which summarizes the basic features of this poster, is distributed to all students. The 1980 data indicate the following statistics for the categories of high, middle, low, and poverty respectively: $27,000, $18,000, $11,000, and $6,900. These data provide students with a graph in the same scale as their effort and highlight any differences between their perceptions and the statistical "reality." Discussion is encouraged as to what might be responsible for the variations among students and between students and the statistics. Whatever further assignments on social inequality are given, this baseline experience allows for better comprehension and generates more effective discussion of the issues.

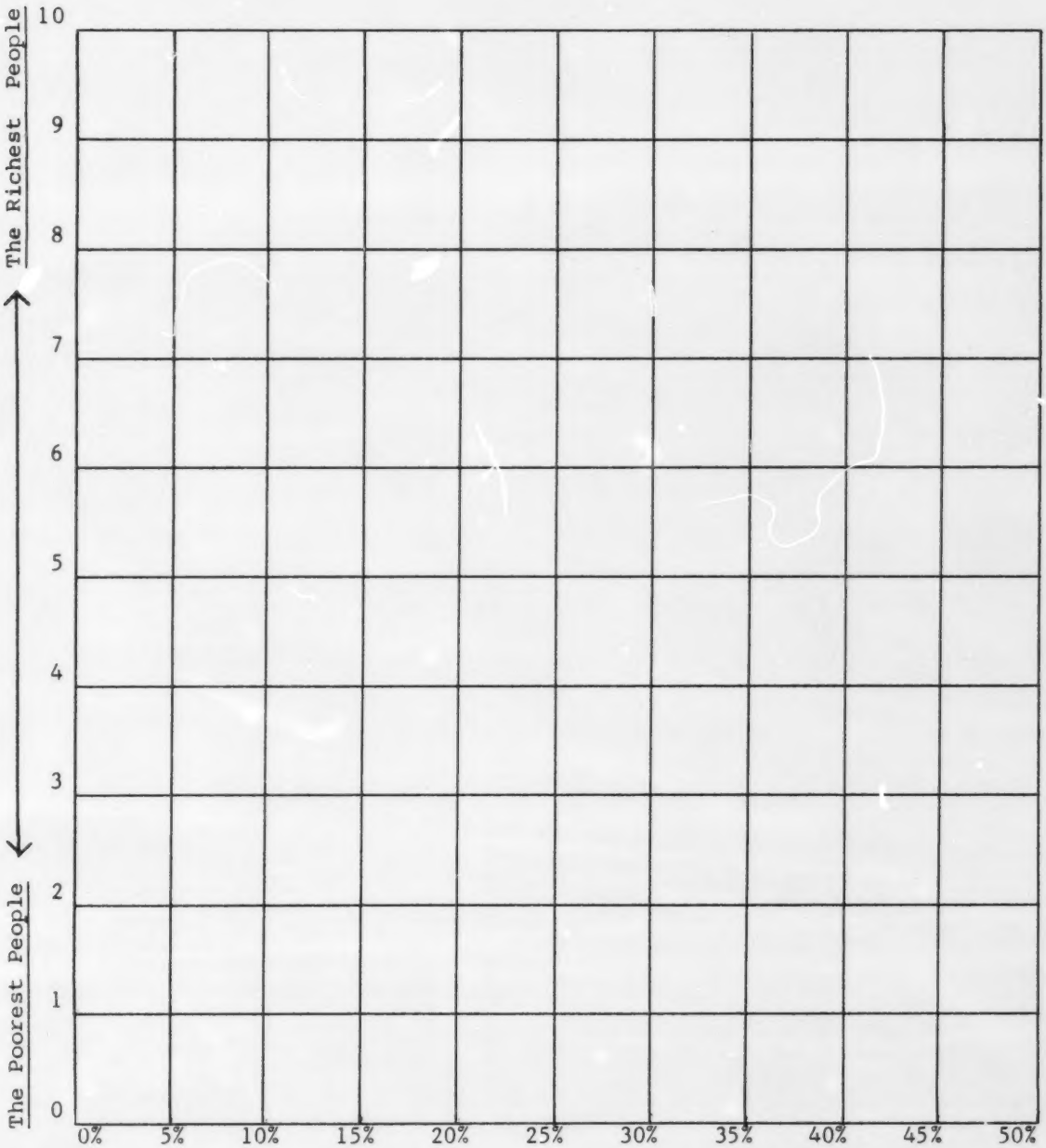
Lacking the Social Graphics poster, a similar presentation can be constructed around census documents, although the amount of detail possible would be somewhat reduced.

POSSIBLE PITFALLS

There is some difficulty communicating the initial assignment so that all students understand what they are to attempt. This does not interfere seriously with the final product but any user of EPISODE 9 is encouraged to describe expectations in detail.

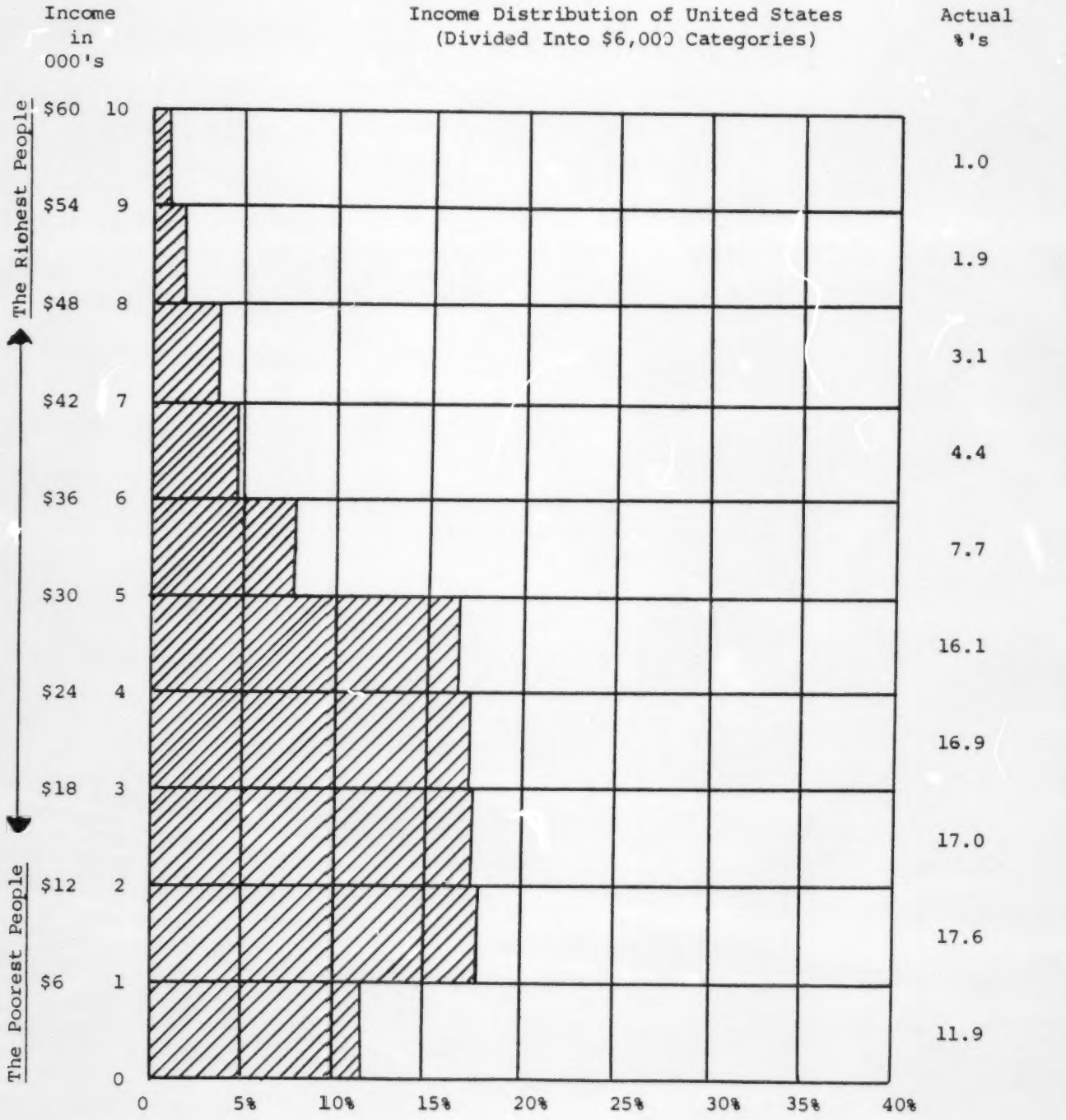
DRAWING A GRAPH ABOUT SOCIAL INEQUALITY Name _____

How would you state graphically the distribution of social inequality in the United States? Use the following frame to graph the percentage of poor, middle income, and high income people in the United States. Also draw 2 dotted lines indicating the poverty line and the wealth line.



SOCIAL INEQUALITY: LOCATING LINES OF POVERTY AND WEALTH Name _____

How would you state graphically the distribution of social inequality in the United States? Use the following data to graph the percentage of poor, middle income, and high income people in the United States. Draw 2 dotted lines indicating the poverty line and the wealthy line.



Data for 1980

EPISODE 10

Student Survey and Contrasting Perspectives: Population Policy

The area of population involves large statistical figures. EPISODE 10 is most effective in helping students to focus on the statistical data, the population debate, and on topics that continue to generate disagreement even among the experts.

CONCEPT AREA

1. Optimum and actual population size.
2. The nature of the population size.
3. The nature of the population problem as perceived by students and demographers.

TEACHING OBJECTIVE

1. To identify for students the actual size of current U.S. and world populations.
2. To compare student perceptions with actual sizes.
3. To obtain student views of the nature of the population problem.
4. To allow students to compare their views on these issues with those of demographers.

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. Survey instrument (see attached document).
2. Toney, Michael B., William F. Stinner, And Yun Kim, "The Population Debate: A Survey of Opinion of a Professional Organization's Membership," Population and Environment, Vol. 4 (3), Fall, 1981, pp. 156-172.

PROCEDURE

Students complete the survey instrument during the first class session devoted to population. With the exception of the initial question on actual population size, the instrument is identical to the one used by Toney, Stinner, and Kim in their survey of members of the Population Association of America. The attempt to establish a statistical baseline is made against which arguments for population policies can be evaluated. Experience suggests that many students are unfamiliar with the current size of populations. Having made their best estimate they seem to more likely retain the actual figures when they are presented.

These remaining items are analyzed in terms of the consistency of common sense views. These views are then compared with those held by the respondents in the Toney, Stinner, and Kim study. Students tend to show marked differences from the "experts" on some items and strong similarity on others. Discussion is focused on whether these differences result from better knowledge on the part of the professional. On other issues the professionals show no more agreement

than do the students. The interpretation may focus on whether the particular item is eliciting responses based on values rather than facts, and consequently additional knowledge does not change responses decisively. Alternative explanations should be encouraged to heighten awareness of crucial issues and help students focus on the most relevant facts and interpretations in the reading assignments which follow. The episode settles some basic questions of fact and identifies the major controversies surrounding those facts in a way that regularly secures student interest.

POSSIBLE PITFALLS: None.

POPULATION SURVEY

1. What is the current population of

   a. the United States _____

   b. the world _____

2. In general, what do you think would be about the ideal size population?

   a. for the United States _____

   b. for the world _____

United States:		World:	
Less than 50 million	_____	Less than 1 billion	_____
50 - 99 million	_____	1-1.9 billion	_____
100 - 199 million	_____	2-2.9 billion	_____
200 - 299 million	_____	3-3.9 billion	_____
300-plus	_____	4-4.9 billion	_____
		5-5.9 billion	_____
		6-plus	_____

3. Which choice best describes the rate of population growth for the area specified?

   a. United States _____

   b. World _____

   1. much too high
   2. little too high
   3. just right
   4. little too low
   5. much too low

4. Indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement with the following statements using this scale:

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	undecided	disagree	strongly disagree

Statement A
_____ Many of today's serious problems are caused by overpopulation.

Statement B
_____ Population problems will be solved in time to avoid widespread catastrophe.

Statement C
_____ Family planning programs offer the most reasonable means of reducing population growth rates.

Statement D
_____ Coercive birth control programs should be initiated in at least some countries immediately.

Statement E
_____ If world population continues to grow at its present rate, coercive birth control will have to be initiated within the next fifty years.

Statement F
_____ More even distribution of resources is a reasonable long-term solution to the population problem.

Statement G
_____ If requested by another country, the U.S. should provide help in establishing and maintaining family planning programs.

Statement H
_____ Before socio-economic aid is given by the United States it should press a country with a high birthrate to establish a family planning type of program.

Table 1

Ideal Population Size for the United States and the World by Degree of Involvement in Population Studies for PAA Members

Ideal Population Size	Total	Degree of Involvement: Demographers	Other Ph.D's	Masters	Less Than Masters
U.S. (millions)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
100	2.3	2.9	2.4	1.9	2.5
100-199	19.1	15.2	20.5	19.0	16.5
200-299	39.2	40.0	40.9	35.8	42.1
300 or more	7.4	8.6	7.6	7.7	5.0
Impossible to answer	14.2	17.1	15.1	12.5	14.0
No response	17.8	16.2	13.5	23.1	19.8
(N)	(1219.0)	(105.0)	(577.0)	(416.0)	(121.0)
World (billions)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
1	2.2	1.0	2.4	2.2	2.5
1-1.9	7.4	5.7	7.3	7.0	10.7
2-2.9	14.1	14.3	14.4	14.9	9.9
3-3.9	14.2	11.4	14.0	13.7	19.8
4-4.9	13.9	17.1	15.8	12.5	6.6
5-5.9	5.0	7.6	5.9	3.1	5.0
6 or more	6.0	6.7	6.1	5.8	5.8
Impossible to answer	17.9	19.1	18.7	16.8	17.4
No response	19.3	17.1	15.4	24.0	22.0
(N)	(1219.0)	(105.0)	(577.0)	(416.0)	(121.0)

Table 2

Attitudes Towards the Growth Rate of the United States Population and World Population by Degree of Involvement in Population Studies for PAA Members

		Degree of Involvement			
Growth Rate	Total	Demographers	Other Ph.D's	Masters	Less Than Masters
The U.S.	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Much too high	16.8	16.2	17.7	15.4	19.0
Little too high	50.7	41.0	51.5	51.7	52.1
Just Right	26.1	31.4	24.3	27.6	24.8
Little too low	2.8	4.8	3.3	1.7	2.5
Much too low	0.3	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.8
No Response	3.3	6.7	3.1	3.4	0.8
(N)	(1219.0)	(105.0)	(577.0)	(416.0)	(121.0)
The World	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Much too high	89.7	87.6	91.7	87.5	90.1
Little too high	7.0	8.6	5.0	8.9	8.3
Just Right	0.7	1.0	0.3	1.2	0.0
Little too low	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0
Much too low	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0
No Response	2.5	2.9	2.8	2.2	1.7
(N)	(1219.0)	(105.0)	(577.0)	(416.0)	(121.0)

Table 3

Opinions Toward Statements About Population Issues by Degree of Involvement in Population Studies for PAA Members

Degree of Involvement and Opinions	Statements							
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
TOTAL MEMBERS[a]	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Strongly Agree	44.2	3.6	12.5	11.6	23.3	15.7	51.1	16.2
Agree	33.8	18.8	30.3	22.4	32.3	31.0	39.6	25.4
Undecided	4.4	30.3	16.9	19.0	17.9	12.3	5.4	13.0
Disagree	11.6	32.5	30.6	23.5	15.1	25.0	2.5	23.8
Strongly Disagree	6.0	14.8	9.7	23.5	11.4	16.0	1.4	21.6
DEMOGRAPHERS	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Strongly Agree	33.6	8.0	15.0	14.9	23.0	17.6	51.0	15.0
Agree	37.6	23.0	25.0	13.9	22.0	31.5	43.2	12.0
Undecided	1.0	31.0	11.0	13.9	16.0	7.8	2.9	15.0
Disagree	14.9	25.0	35.0	18.8	18.0	23.5	2.9	21.0
Strongly Disagree	12.9	13.0	14.0	38.5	21.0	19.6	0.0	37.0
OTHER Ph.D.'s	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Strongly Agree	47.5	3.6	12.9	11.2	26.5	12.0	55.8	16.9
Agree	33.5	19.1	31.7	23.3	31.3	26.1	36.8	28.0
Undecided	3.5	28.2	18.2	18.8	16.4	14.2	4.4	12.7
Disagree	9.3	32.6	28.6	25.6	15.3	29.3	1.4	23.5
Strongly Disagree	6.2	16.5	8.6	21.1	10.6	18.4	1.6	18.9

[a]No subcategory of members has an N of less than 100

Table 3 (continued)

Degree of Involvement and Opinions	Statements							
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
MASTERS	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Strongly Agree	41.0	3.5	11.0	10.5	19.9	19.7	46.5	13.9
Agree	34.1	17.1	29.8	22.2	34.3	38.1	40.5	23.8
Undecided	6.7	31.6	16.5	20.1	19.7	9.8	7.1	14.1
Disagree	12.8	33.9	32.2	22.5	15.7	20.6	4.4	25.3
Strongly Disagree	5.4	13.9	10.5	24.7	10.4	11.8	1.5	22.9
LESS THAN MASTERS	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Strongly Agree	47.1	0.8	13.4	14.9	20.0	18.3	44.6	21.5
Agree	31.4	19.0	30.3	25.6	39.2	29.2	46.3	28.9
Undecided	4.1	34.7	16.8	20.6	20.8	15.0	6.6	9.1
Disagree	15.7	33.9	31.1	20.7	10.0	21.7	0.8	23.1
Strongly Disagree	1.7	11.6	8.4	18.2	10.0	15.8	1.7	17.4

EPISODE 11

Student Surveys and Contrasting Perspectives on Bureaucracy

Sometimes studying definitions can be a ritualistic and meaningless activity. EPISODE 11 sets the stage for a serious consideration of the central features of the bureaucracy by drawing out and examining systematically the value judgments that are closely identified with the concept in popular thinking. These judgments are themselves subjected to critical scrutiny before the attempt is made to present a sociological definition of the term.

The bureaucracy unit is ideal for raising and exploring the issues surrounding the definitions of social problems. Survey materials are designed to tap students' views of bureaucracy. These views are contrasted with definitions from sociological and journalistic sources. This epidode considers only student (common sense) definitions and journalistic definitions.

CONCEPT AREA

1. Bureaucracy.
2. Connotations and denotations of definitions.
3. Stereotypes.

TEACHING OBJECTIVE

1. To illustrate the connotative and denotative elements of common sense and journalistic definitions.
2. To identify the particular stereotypes shared by or distinctive to common sense and journalistic images of bureaucracy.
3. To help students sort out definition from value judgment regarding bureaucracies.

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. Survey instrument (see attached document).
2. Five or 6 cartoons depicting bureaucracies and/or bureaucrats.

PROCEDURE

Distribute the survey instrument to all students. Ask them to respond to the four questions based on their best knowledge. (This form is distributed prior to any discussion or assignment related to bureaucracy.) Students frequently object that they do not know the answers yet, but the instructor must firmly insist that they have heard the term bureaucracy, have some idea of its meaning, and therefore are capable of writing some kind of statement. When students have finished, distribute copies of the cartoons depicting bureaucrats. Assign students in groups of 3-4 to work on identifying the following characteristics of each cartoon:
(1) What characteristics of the bureaucrat are revealed in the cartoon? (2) What other people or groups are depicted as being involved in some relationship with the bureaucracy? (3) What is the nature of that relationship? After allowing 8-10 minutes for groups to identify these points redirect attention to the blackboard. Write headings on the blackboard for each of the topics considered.

Students

Definitions of Bureaucracy	Definitions of Bureaucrats	Characteristics of Bureaucrats

Cartoons

Characteristics of Bureaucrats (Implications for Definitions)	Groups to whom Bureaucrats Relate	Type of Relationship

Solicit student responses to each of these categories. Record all distinct responses. The point is to allow students to see the full range of images that are held or perceived. They will have the opportunity to examine and practice using more precise definitions in other exercises and readings. Thus, concern over "correctness" of responses is inappropriate at this time.

This exercise has never failed to generate strong parallel negative stereotypes of the bureaucrat on the part of both students and editorial cartoonists. The ensuing discussion deals specifically with the nature of the social problem that bureaucracy represents as it is inferred from these negative characteristics. Usually there are no positive characteristics proposed or identified at all. The nature of the cartoon as a repository for the cliches of popular opinion about bureaucracies and its near identity with students' common sense views can be developed. Discussion then focuses on the extent to which the cartoons and other media have shaped those stereotypes and the extent to which they are merely reflections of the stereotypes.

POSSIBLE PITFALLS: In the initial phase of the survey assignment some students will insist that they "don't know." The teacher must be firm and insist that everyone has some ideas about bureaucracy and bureaucrats.

SURVEY INSTRUMENT: BUREAUCRACY

Name _____ Class _____

Exploring ideas about bureaucracy and bureaucrats,

Define the term, BUREAUCRACY;

Describe the TYPICAL CHARACTERISTICS of a bureaucrat;

How do you see government bureaucrats working in the U.S. today?
Do they pose any problems for our society?

Name any of the major regulatory agencies in the U.S.
Describe the scope of their authority.

EPISODE 12

Student Surveys and Contrasting Perspectives: Race Relations

EPISODE 12 is concerned with bringing to the surface student knowledge and opinion about the state of race relations in this society. Commitment to answers to initial questions will increase student attentiveness to these issues as they are raised in other sources.

CONCEPT AREA

1. Population size and distribution of black Americans.
2. Prejudice.
3. Discrimination.
4. History of race relations.

TEACHING OBJECTIVE

1. To present data on the current size and distribution of the black population.
2. To compare these statistical data with common sense perceptions of students.
3. To obtain and analyze student perceptions of the nature of changes in black-white relations.
4. To obtain and analyze student knowledge of the recent history of American race relations.
5. To provide common sense data for later comparison with journalistic and sociological sources.

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. Survey instrument (see attached document).
2. Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1979.

PROCEDURE

Students fill out the survey form during the first class session on race relations. Their responses to each of the three sets of questions are summarized on the board. The first item on the size and distribution of the black population usually elicits a wide range of estimates of size, and some fairly accurate estimates of concentration. Facts can be checked easily by reference to the abstract. Reproduced copies of the relevant tables are attached for examination by students. From Table 25 students can determine the relative numbers of blacks in the U.S. This usually creates a lively discussion around the reasons for the various perceptions of this figure. Most students generally conclude that their personal experience plays a determining role in inflating or deflating their perceptions. (See Goldschmid and Wilson, Passing On Sociology, for a similar observation.) Some insist on the greater accuracy of their observations such as one student who "knew" that most blacks ignored the census and were in her opinion 5 times as numerous as the official statistics claimed. The point is not to "prove" such observations wrong but to get students to address and recognize the logic of and influences on perceptions by themselves and by others.

Table 26 allows students to examine the extent of black population movement in the recent past. They can identify those regions and states which have gained and lost black population over the past twenty years. This is important as part of the factual background for later discussion of the reasons for that population movement.

Table 24 can be surveyed quickly to identify those places which have substantially higher and lower proportions of black citizens. Listing both on the board as students identify them creates a striking impression of the extent to which a "national" problem is transformed into many different "local" problems depending on where one lives.

The second set of questions on prejudice and discrimination cannot be compared immediately with other data; but common sense views of students provide the basis for future comparisons with the positions advanced by journalists and sociologists. Most white students tend to think that prejudice has been reduced. Blacks are less likely to agree and more likely to argue that there has been no change. (For a summary of national opinion on black/white relations see Public Opinion, April/May 1981, pp. 32-40.) Students may be referred again to Social Awareness and Social Problems, p. 13.

The question of discrimination requires some consideration of the possibility of different rates of change in different institutional areas. Students are encouraged to consider each of five major institutional areas of social life separately, rather than pass a global judgment. This increases sensitivity to arguments advanced in their reading assignments, which discuss these individually, and lays the basis for consideration of the logical and causal connections between these institutions.

The final survey item awakens students to the historical development of a social problem. Few are able to specify more than one or two events, and then only in vague terms. They name Martin Luther King, Jr., mention Civil Rights, and sometimes speak of demonstrations. Expansion on these limited recollections is sought by an assignment in which all citations to race relations in the historical chronologies of various almanacs are found through lectures which cover the most central historical events, and by assigning the accounts of specific events as reported in the newspapers at the time. Some enlargement of the sense of this history is regarded as central to an understanding of the current state of race relations.

POSSIBLE PITFALLS: None.

PROBING QUESTIONS ABOUT BLACK-WHITE RELATIONS

Name(s)_____

_____

_____

1. What is the approximate % of people who are Afro-Americans (blacks): _____

   Blacks are not evenly distributed throughout the United States. Where are the highest concentrations of black citizens?

2. Have race relations changed during the past 50 years?
   (a) At the micro level (amount and extent of prejudice)?

   (b) At the macro level (changing institutional arrangements which allow for a more equal opportunity for all citizens)? (Does it make any difference which institutions one examines? Consider education, politics, business, neighborhoods, and social activities separately.)

3. During the past 50 years what political and social events in the U.S. have been most important in the area of race relations? List at least 5 key events

EPISODE 13

Probing Questions about the Drug Problem

This episode is used as a classroom opener for the course unit on drugs. Openers are intended to initiate dialogue with students about their common sense ideas. They provoke interest in the topic by raising questions that will be pursued through a variety of reading assignments in journalism and sociology.

CONCEPT AREA

1. Distinction between private troubles of personal situations and public issues of social structural constraints.
2. Policy issues of criminalizing and de-criminalizing the manufacture, distribution, and use of drugs.
3. Assessing the logical relationship between the definition of a social problem and its possible solution.

TEACHING OBJECTIVE

1. Help students to develop a logically consistent line of reasoning about social problems. Specifically, EPISODE 13 stresses that coherent statements about social problems require logical consistency of diagnosis and prognosis.
2. Help students recognize the distinction between personal and social structural definitions of the drug problem.
3. Help students better understand the perplexities of social policies about drugs.

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. One sheet of blank paper.

PROCEDURE

On a blank sheet of paper students complete the following 2 sentences with brief paragraphs:

(1) "The nature of the drug problem is . . . ."
(2) "The solution to the drug problem is . . . . "

Students are given 15-20 minutes to write brief statements on their definition and solution to the drug problem.

The teacher then leads a class discussion on definitions of the drug problem. Student definitions are summarized on the blackboard. These statements include a variety of personalistic definitions as well as public policy definitions. The teacher then summarizes a wide array of solutions to the drug problem on another section of the blackboard. Students must then construct logical connections between definitions and solutions to the problem. It soon becomes apparent that one's ideas about solving the drug problem are contingent on initial definitions of the problem. If the problem is primarily a personal medical concern then a law enforcement solution may not be logically consistent.

Since students offer such a wide range of definitions and solutions it is apparent that one line of reasoning cannot encompass a complete understanding of the drug problem. The teacher then concludes the class session by suggesting that the same diversity of opinion is found among experts in law enforcement, medicine, politics, academia, and journalism. The following written assignment accompanies this episode:

In 1 or 2 sentences finish the statement: "The nature of the drug problem is . . . ." And in one or two additional sentences, finish the statement: "The solution to the drug problem is . . . ." Now justify your sentences with a logically consistent line of reasoning. Use information and ideas from reading assignments.

POSSIBLE PITFALLS: None.

EPISODE 14

Applying Principles of Bureaucracy in a College or University

EPISODE 14 joins the concreteness of the student's local school to Weber's general model of bureaucracy. It is a case study investigation of formal authority in a complex organization. The episode is a poignant illustration of how lower level participants in bureaucracies are sometimes oblivious to the structural features of their organization.

Students construct a cognitive map of their school. The assignment is similar to the work of Richard Sundeen and Ted Wagenaar (Eighty-One Techniques for Teaching Sociological Concepts (Eds.) Reed Geertsen, Richard Sundeen, Pat Allen, Emily Gunning, ASA, 1979).

CONCEPT AREA:

1. Weber's ideal type characteristics of a bureaucracy.
2. Formal authority in a complex organization.

TEACHING OBJECTIVE:

1. Help students to better understand the nature of authority systems by examining their college or university.
2. Help students to apply Weberian concepts of bureaucracy to a complex organization.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

1. "Identifying the Structure of Formal Authority in Your College or University" (see attached document).
2. College or university handbook at student's school.
3. The official organizational chart for the student's school.
4. Weber's statement on the characteristics of bureaucracy.

PROCEDURE:

The class opens with students receiving a 15 minute assignment, "Identifying the Structure of Formal Authority In Your College or University." The assignment asks students to diagram the formal authority system of their college or university (see attached document). They are expected also to describe the type of authority exercised in each key position.

Students then meet in small discussion groups to share knowledge about the formal authority system of their schools. Following 10 minutes of small group discussion the teacher asks a representative from each group to diagram the structure of formal authority on the blackboard. Most students at large community colleges and large state universities have great difficulty with this initial assignment. Students know about professors and presidents but have little knowledge on how the two positions are connected formally. Other aspects of the formal system (e.g., student services) are equally mystifying.

The teacher diagrams key features of the school's official organizational chart. Discussion then focuses on the fact that common sense knowledge of complex organization provides minimal awareness of the formal structure. What are the consequences of this ignorance?

During the next classroom session students are assigned Weber's essay on the characteristics of bureaucracy. The key points of the ideal type are reviewed in class. Students are then asked to think about their school as a bureaucratic system. To what extent do bureaucratic characteristics specified by Weber seem to apply at the local level? This question is highlighted by the following written assignment:

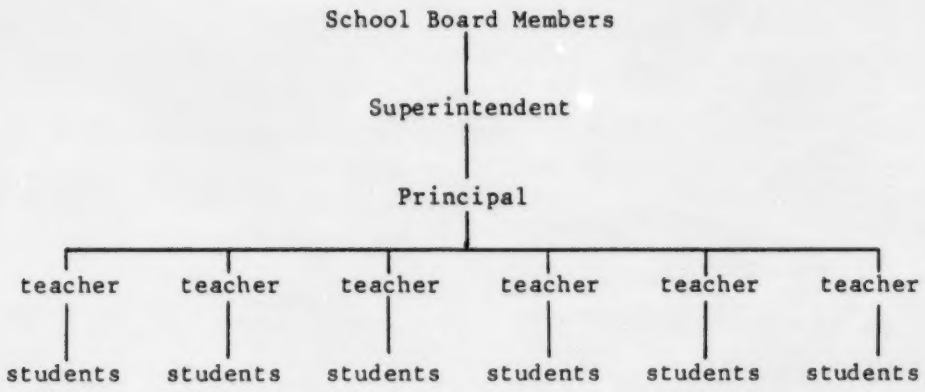
"Professor Puritan Peabody accuses Sneaky Sam of cheating on an exam. Peabody flunks Sam on the spot and Sam is sure he has been treated unjustly. He decides to use the formal channels of authority to appeal his case. Discuss the processes of decision making that Sam would follow. How does this case exemplify the formal properties of bureaucracy outlined by Weber?"

It soon becomes apparent to students that they must directly investigate their school. They consult the school handbook and interview key officials for pertinent information. Once students complete their field work they have sufficient concrete knowledge about a specific complex organization to appreciate critically Weber's typology of bureaucracy.

POSSIBLE PITFALLS: None.

IDENTIFYING THE STRUCTURE OF FORMAL AUTHORITY IN YOUR COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY

All persons living in modern societies such as the United States have extensive experience in formal organizations. Persons learn to recognize systems of authority in which decisions are made by top level people and carried out by lower level people. All formal organizations have structures of authority. Perhaps the authority in a formal organization most familiar to students is the local school arrangement of school board members, superintendent, principal, teachers, and students. It can be diagrammed in the following manner:



Using the public school as an illustration of an authority system in a formal organization, diagram the formal authority system at your college or university. This model should extend from the highest level of decision making to the lowest level of compliance. Please construct your diagram on the opposite side of this page and describe the type of authority exercised in each key position.

EPISODE 15

Assessing the Line of Reasoning in a Documentary Film

Previous episodes have been devoted to the appraisal of print media. But this episode turns the critical eye toward television. It examines an NBC documentary (1965) on urban problems. The media is different but the guidelines for critical reasoning are identical.

CONCEPT AREA

1. Five topics of critical reasoning are:
   a. Definitions.
   b. Evidence.
   c. Cause-effect relationships.
   d. Values.
   e. Logical consistency of reasoning.
2. Urban problems.

TEACHING OBJECTIVE

1. Help students to apply topics of critical reasoning to a TV documentary.
2. Help students to recognize the distinction between portraying the amelioration of private troubles in the city and articulating the public issues of urban policy.

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. Student Guide: Assessing the Adequacy of a Social Problem Statement" (see attached document to EPISODE 4).
2. Film: Harlem Crusader, 29 minutes, rental, $10.30. The University of Illinois Film Center offers the following description: "Presents a close-up study of a social worker's activities in Spanish Harlem over a 5 year period. Shows the problems he faces in a single block in mid-Manhatten where 3,000 people, mostly Puerto Ricans, live. Includes the sights and sounds of the modern inner city."
3. Sometimes an additional article is used from Reader's Digest: "Dr. Baird's Double Life," by William Schulz, January 1973, pp. 127-130.

PROCEDURE

Prior to the showing of the film students are given the "Student Guide." They study the film analytically and take notes on what they see. The use of direct quotes is encouraged because they are especially helpful during class discussion.

Immediately following the film there is class discussion on the line of reasoning found in the NBC documentary. The film's thesis implies that the solution to urban problems requires many saintly people to work with personal pathologies on a one to one basis. Classroom discussion then shifts to the adequacy of this line of reasoning to develop sound social policy for American cities. What are the logical consequences of a viewpoint that ignores the larger demographic, economic, and political forces which shape American urban life?

Sometimes students then read an article ("Dr. Baird's Double Life") from Reader's Digest that is strikingly similar to the Harlem Crusader. They write a critical essay on the personalistic approach to urban problems. The following question guides their inquiry:

> "The film, Harlem Crusader, presents a perspective on urban problems in the United States. A similar view is developed by William Schulz in 'Dr. Baird's Double Life.' Construct the line of reasoning found in these 2 case studies. Is this line of reasoning adequate to articulate public issues of contemporary urban policy?"

POSSIBLE PITFALLS: A 50 minute clas creates serious time constraints for an adequate discussion of the film. The debriefing session should be a least 30 minutes. It is crucial to the episode to give students time to discover the film's personalistic thesis and then to move on to a critical assessment of the limitations of this perspective.